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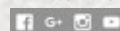
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PG. 16



PG. 20

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PG. 26



PG. 30



PG. 34



PG. 38



PG. 42



PG. 46



PG. 50



PG. 54

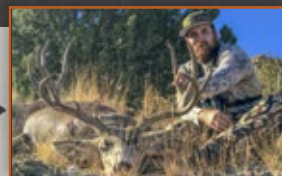


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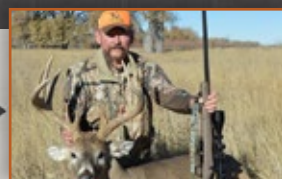
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Iota Outdoors Rings

PG. 20



JORDAN STAILLEY
Zamberlan Boot Crt

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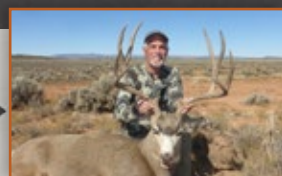
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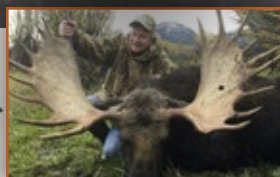
RICK YOUNG
Caribou Combo Kit

PG. 46



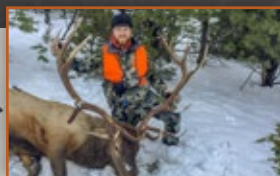
TIM BAUGH
onXmaps GPS chip

PG. 54



MICHAEL SPARKS
ShockStraps Safety

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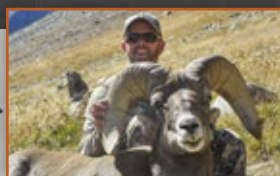
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Havalon PIRANTA Knife

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CRAIG ANDERSON
Primos Trigger Stick

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RANDALL GREG
Seek Outside Tent

PG. 42



GEORGE BERMUDEZ
Leupold 10x42 Scope

PG. 50



RICK HENDERSON
Swagger Bipod

PG. 90





YETI *BUILT FOR THE WILD.*

PERFECT

This hunt was the culmination of perfect timing that led this fine young man Joey Tantardino and his dad, Joe Tantardino to us. My wife Shelley and I own and operate SC2 Outdoors in northern California where we lease and handle the wildlife management on a couple of private ranches. One is located in the Northeastern California Elk Zone and it is perfect habitat for the Rocky Mountain elk.

The zone is massive, and with only 10 archery, 15 rifle, and 2 apprentice tags, it affords the bulls in the unit space to get old and exploit their great genetics. The demand for these tags is high and the draw odds are astronomical. At 14, Joey beat the odds on his first attempt and pulled a 411 apprentice tag, a 491 to 1 chance.

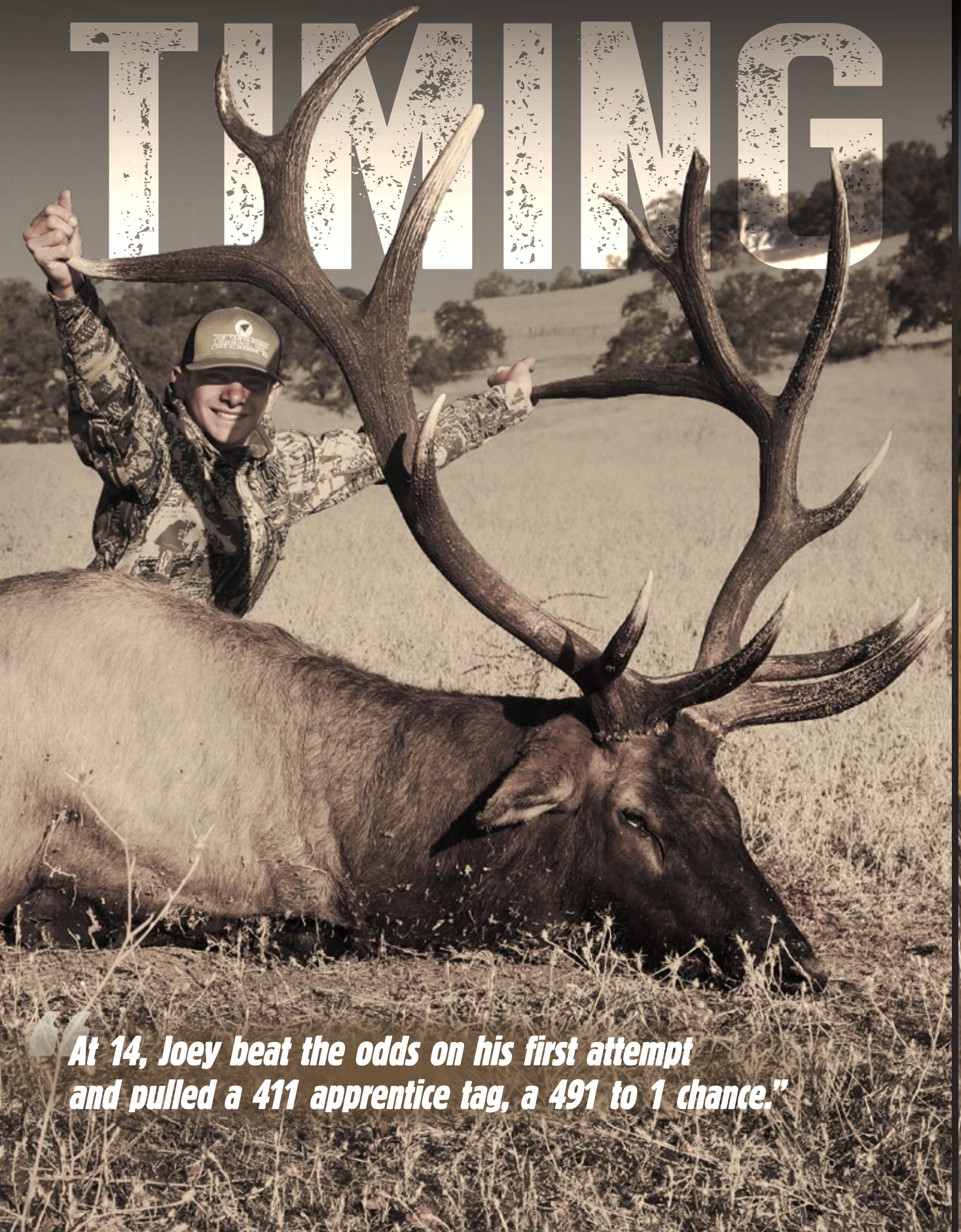
We were in full swing of preparing for our fall schedule. The draw results

were posted and we were fielding calls from hunters for deer, elk and antelope but we still didn't have a rifle hunter for this premium elk hunt. In California, the Department of Fish and Wildlife will not produce a list to registered guides or outfitters of successful applicants, so for the northeastern elk hunts we were trying to find 27 people out of 39 million.

Our landowners, the Rickert family,



TWINNING



“At 14, Joey beat the odds on his first attempt and pulled a 411 apprentice tag, a 491 to 1 chance.”

have always been vested in bettering our community and schools. So, when I approached them about donating a hunt on the ranch for 2018 to a junior hunter, they were all in with us. August 10th began our social media search to find either of the two apprentice tag holders.

We were getting information from government employees, biologists, and wardens wanting to make sure we were in contact with these kids. Social media is an amazing thing. It didn't take long for us to locate both tag holders. It was apparent that the girl was in good hands. We then got that call from Joey's father, who of course was skeptical, but he had gotten our information through wardens that he knew, so he decided to contact us on August 14th. Perfect timing.

Joe is a PG&E contractor and had been extremely busy with the Carr fire that devastated the Redding area and so he did not have time to scout. He was super-excited but still skeptical. I did my best to convince him that our offer was legit.

As the season approached, Shelley and I scouted and checked our trail cameras a couple times a week and got some great intel from the archery hunt just days before Joey's hunt. We shared pictures of the numerous bulls that were showing up. I was confident that with a little cooperation of the elk and the extra advantage of the rifle, we could put Joey on a mature 6-point bull. That would be our goal.

We had finished our archery hunt on Sunday, our tails tucked

a little because the elk had been unresponsive to calls and swirling winds had busted our most promising opportunities. The rut had yet to get going but we had a lot of elk and several great bulls. On Tuesday night, the Tantardinos rolled into town and I met them at their hotel to go over the logistics and the obligatory paperwork, excited about what the morning would offer.

We picked them up at 4:15 a.m. and headed east to the ranch. Our plan was to get on the north ridge and listen for elk in the fields below. As we sat in the darkness in the oaks and dry grass rangeland, the bulls bugled in the fields below and in both canyons heading east. As civil twilight began, we took position on a high point overlooking the fields. We had a herd of cows and calves below and elk were slowly exiting the creek. We had a small six and a big six moving about the herd below and to the east of us. Shelley had spotted a great bull laying down in the middle of the herd, fully protected in his current position.

The winds were still, so Joey and I moved back while Joe and Shelley watched from our vantage point. We dropped down behind the ridge and took a small seasonal creek drainage for cover and then popped up on a herd moving east, and in it was our man. This bull had moved down about September 2nd and now he was running the show. On August 17th this bull was about 12 miles away, now he was 167 yards



away, glunking and keeping an eye on the other bulls that were bugling and trying to peel a couple cows from his harem. Perfect timing.

Because of this, Joey and I were able to get the Bog Pod set up, talk about the shot and wait for cows to clear and for him to turn broadside. Once he did, I could hardly get "go ahead" out of my mouth before the report of the rifle and the bull hit the ground. Joey's grandfather had passed away in June and Joey was using his grandfather's pre-WWII Winchester Model 70 in .30-06, it doesn't get much

GEAR LIST

Firearm Winchester Model 70 Pre-'64 .30-06 (Grandpa's Gun) | **Scope** Leupold | **Ammo** Hornady Precision Hunter 178 grain | **Binoculars** Swarovski EL 12x50, Leica Geovid 10x42 | **Clothing** KUIU, Sitka | **Boots** Lathrop & Son | **Pack** KUIU Icon Pro | **GPS** Garmin Oregon | **Shooting sticks** Bog Pod | **Game calls** Carlton

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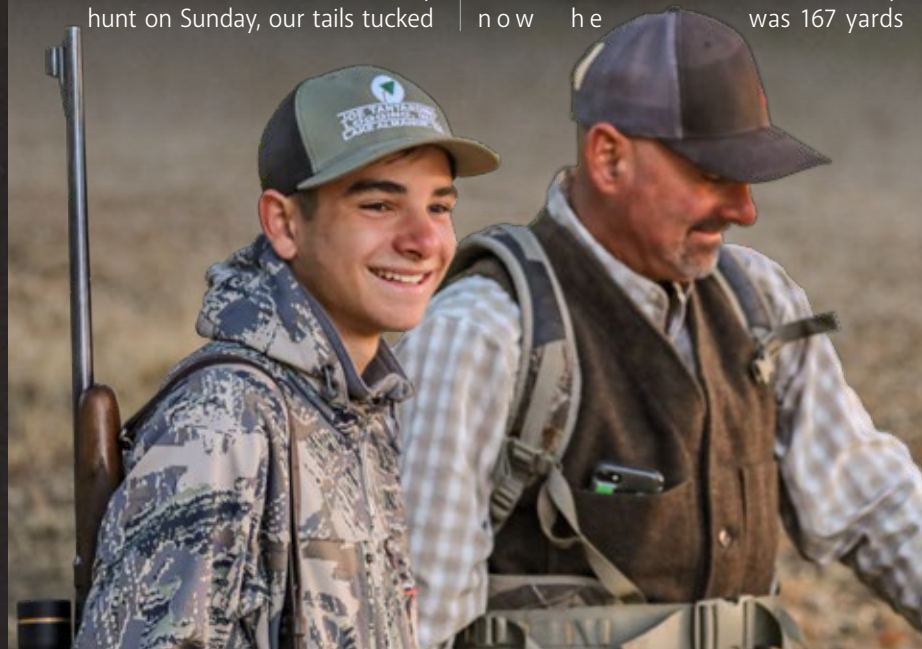
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Joey is a 14-year-old freshman who attends Chester High School. He is an avid fisherman who designs and builds his own jigs. He loves to spend time outdoors.

Gear Giveaway
see page 4.



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better than that.

After a quick hug, high five and congratulatory dance, It didn't take Shelley and Joe long to work their way down to us, and after a brief recap we approached the bull. I had seen this bull on numerous occasions and I couldn't wait to admire the mass he possessed; he was truly magnificent. I think we spent a good 45 minutes just talking, laughing and being awestruck. Then I called one of the owners, the ranch foreman, one of our local CDFW biologists and my daughter. It wasn't long before everyone was out to help and get a look at this great bull.

Unofficially, he scored 420" gross and 398 6/8" net, Boone and Crockett. He has 59" and 54" beams and 74" of mass. I hope he has etched a memory in Joey's mind that he and his dad will share forever.



One shot with his grandpa's old rifle anchored the bull perfectly.



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SCOPING IT OUT

BY GUY EASTMAN

IMAGE TAKEN BY Felt Sou Media



anxiously wondering what next year might bring for the Cowboy state. With the deer seasons in Montana, Arizona and Colorado yet to materialize, I think there could be some very good results on the horizon when it comes to deer.

The antelope season in Wyoming was very solid again this year. I expect we could see a near record harvest and some very good bucks entered into the records book for the 2018 hunting season. Barring a rough winter, I think next year could be even better. Montana also has seen antelope herd and quality increases this year. This may lead to increased quotas for next year which could reduce draw odds for those of us out-of-stater's who religiously apply there. Southern Colorado did gift me yet another big antelope buck, for which I am beyond blessed and thankful.

And now we begin our research all over again. Time to gather up those point totals and start digging into the MRS for your next adventure. Speaking of which, I should probably start my work on Wyoming elk, the first state and species up on the list with a deadline fast approaching of January 31st, soon to be followed by Arizona elk and antelope. Both sections will be published in the next issue of EBJ, January/February.

It's never too late or early for that matter to start next year's research. You just never know what strange twists and turns the application and draw season can send your way. I'm ready for some more unknowns in my life. For as they say, "Grab life by the horns."

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Guy Eastman

And just like that...she's gone. Seems like some weird law of nature—the slower the fall seems to arrive the quicker it seems to blow by.

This hunting season has been a whirlwind to say the least. The elk rut was two weeks late or more, while the drought down south seems to have stunted the growth a bit on the bulls, while the late rut played fits with the bow season.

Based on what I have seen so far, the elk up North have done very, very well again this year particularly once you factor in the fact that some very big bulls slipped through the cracks during the early bow season due to the tardiness of the rut. Wyoming is putting some very solid bulls on the ground and Montana, well the Big Sky State is again speaking for itself when it comes to enormous bulls.

The mule deer have again done well in most areas. Colorado's seasons are just now starting up, but the earlier seasons in Wyoming and Idaho have produced some very, very solid bucks. If I have to call it right now at this point I would say that Idaho and Utah were without a doubt, leaders in the mule deer category for 2018. Great news, to see Idaho back in the running for big mule deer again after decades of less than stellar showings for the mule deer faithful in the Gem State. Western Wyoming seems to have rebounded beyond expectations this year as well when it comes to big mule deer bucks. I'm sure there are a lot of others out there like me,

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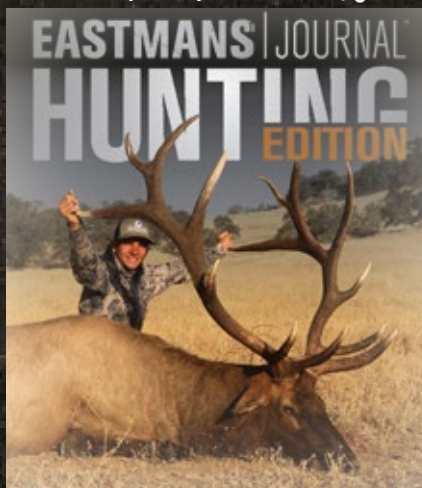
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A LIFETIME...**”

I am very fortunate that I have access to over 30,000 private acres in the beautiful Lemhi Valley of Idaho. This amazing valley is breathtaking, with its 10,000 ft. snow-capped peaks, dark timber forests, sagebrush flats and agriculture fields, making it a hunter's paradise.

A good friend of mine, Mike Levy, was fortunate enough to draw a coveted once-in-a-lifetime moose tag in Idaho. Talk about lucky, it was also the first time he had ever put in for moose. Mike called me and asked about getting him on a decent bull. I told him we would not only put him on a decent bull, we would do our best to put him on a trophy bull.

During the archery season I had been seeing some good bulls. One bull in particular really stood out as a dandy. This bull looked so big that we actually nicknamed him the Alaskan Shiras' moose. Obviously, Alaskan moose are much bigger in general than the smaller Shiras' moose, but this Shiras' had the rack of a good Alaskan bull. I had every intention of putting my good buddy Mike on this moose if I could find him during season.

Mike would call me every few days and ask me if I had been seeing the big bull. One of my guys, Tyler, had actually been able to get some video of this bull earlier while on an elk hunt but the Alaskan bull was hanging on the neighbor's property. It appeared that he was living on two different neighbors that bordered state land. I

was hoping that he would wander onto our property during the rut and never leave.

On October 10th while hunting with an elk client, I spotted a giant black spot in one of our meadows. As I looked through my binoculars the object was for sure a moose and appeared to be a great moose. I decided to drive around the property and take a closer look. I was able to park within a few hundred yards of the meadow and work my way through the willows to the edge of the meadow. As I came to the edge the Alaskan bull was standing only 100 yards away, feeding in the field. At first, I thought he had something black on his antler like a random round mud spot. It

turned out to be a giant bullet hole in his left antler. This bull had everything going for it with giant tine length, a width that appeared to be over 50", multiple tines, amazing paddles, and double thick brows on each side. We had to have this bull.

I backed out, called Mike and told him to get to my location immediately. The conversation went something like this.

"Mike, I have a giant moose spotted in a great spot to get him. Get here ASAP."

"Why don't we just do it tomorrow?"

"Are you crazy? This is a bull of a lifetime. We cannot wait until

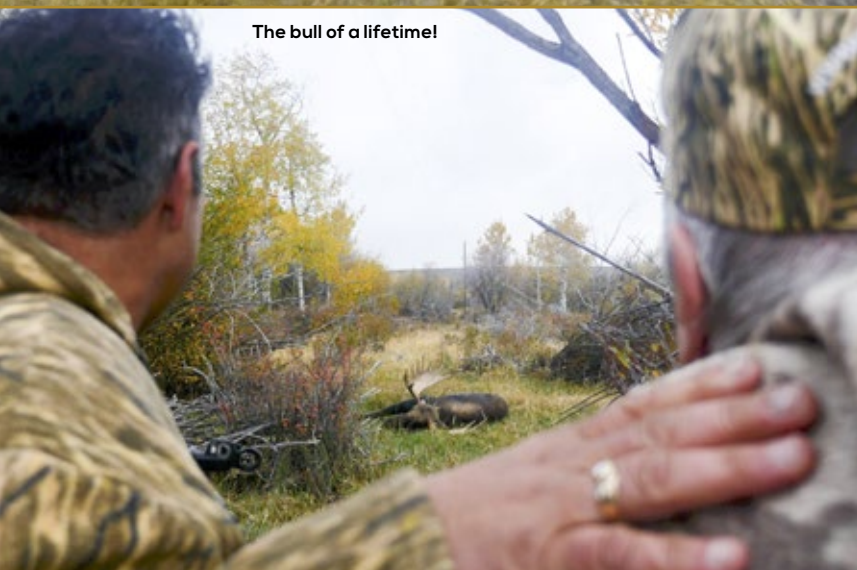
tomorrow! I can't make him stay on the property. You need to get here now!"

"I don't even know where all my hunting stuff is."

"Get your gun, get your tag, and get here now."

Honestly, who would say such crazy things with the bull of a lifetime for anyone standing 100 yards away from the guy calling him?

Mike took about 45 minutes to get to the spot and by the time he arrived the bull had walked off and gone into the willows. I could still see the bull about 200 yards deep into the thick willows and decided to try and call him out. I made a few cow moans and the bull would look but was not interested



The bull of a lifetime!

Gear Giveaway
see page 4.



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in my lonely cow calls. After a few failed attempts Mike and I decided to sneak through the willows and get closer to the bull. We stalked to about 100 yards when I decided to give him some bull grunts and challenge him instead of catering to his love needs.

The bullet hole bull instantly raised his head and started the awesome swagger that only a big bull moose can do. He rocked his head back and forth as his waddle swayed and he started to make his way towards us - 100 yards, 90 yards, 80 yards, he just kept coming. Stopping at about 60 yards away with his head high in the air, sun glistening off his antlers he paused, looking for me, the challenger. Two giant willow

bushes kept us from being able to make a clean shot at the bull.

I told Mike to get ready on his sticks as I was going to call one more time. My grunting had not even stopped when this bull came flying out of the brush and stood broadside at 40 yards, looking for a fight and only seeing us. Mike was able to put a single bullet from his custom .45-70 right in the breadbasket. The bull absorbed the bullet like a sponge and was still looking for a fight. Mike put two more shots in the same spot and the bull dropped in its tracks. The bull we had nicknamed the Alaskan Shiras' was now down on the ground and had a new nickname, the Bullet Hole Bull.


As we admired this magnificent moose, Mike and I laughed at how it took him almost 45 minutes to arrive and only 4-5 minutes to actually seal the deal. Mike was very thankful that he came down so quick and will be forever grateful because this is the biggest bull he has ever seen in the area. The Bullet Hole Bull ended up being 55" wide and gross scored just enough to make the books. The bull will forever live on his wall and will forever live to be one of my most rewarding hunting experiences. It's very humbling to know that I was there with him to fulfill his lifelong dream.



GEAR LIST

Rifle .45-70 Marlin | **Scope** Vortex | **Ammo** Double Tap .45-70 Swift A frame | **Binoculars** Vortex Razor HD 10 x 42 | **Spotting Scope** Vortex Razor HD 20x60 x 80 | **Clothing** M2D CAMO, Muck boots | **Pack** Apex | **Rangefinder** Vortex 1500

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: I am a professional hunter with a TV show, M2D's *Living the Dream*. We are in our 10th season of doing hunting shows on networks like FOX, Wild TV, and Sportsman's Channel. I am a writer and member of *Sportsman's News* and I own and operate M2D CAMO Properties which has hunting operations in WA, OR, ID, and CO.



It was the end of March, 2017 when I had a missed call and voicemail from an unknown Wyoming number. I listened to the voicemail and to my total surprise, it was Ike Eastman wanting to congratulate me on being the first EASTMANS' HUNTING JOURNAL digital subscription hunt winner. I couldn't believe it! When I called him back he let me know that I would be joining him and Guy in Colorado on their annual trophy antelope hunt that October. This worked out perfectly with my schedule as I already had a couple other

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hunts planned earlier and later, but no scheduling conflicts for October. I've been a reader of EASTMANS' HUNTING JOURNAL and their MRS section for quite a few years and have been gathering preference points in multiple states in preparation for a future trophy speed goat hunt, but to this point I had not had the opportunity to hunt antelope in an area that had true trophy potential.

It was an easy drive to Colorado from where I live in Nebraska. The day before the opener in early October I met up with Ike and Guy in southern Colorado. We sat down for lunch in town and exchanged a few hunting stories. They gave me the rundown on the area we would be hunting and since they have been hunting this spot for many years they were very familiar with the terrain and where the majority of bucks would be found. They felt confident that we could find a trophy buck the first day or two of the season.

After finishing lunch, it was early afternoon, the sun was beating down and the wind was howling. We wanted to spend some time that afternoon scouting the area so I rode with Guy as we drove on some two-tracks around the area. I was amazed at

the number of bucks we were able to look over in just a few hours. It seemed that over every hill we crested there was another group of antelope. During our scouting we made mental notes of the nicest bucks and their location. These were ones that had the potential to be shooters when the season started the next morning. By that evening we had made a solid inventory of goats in the area with a couple in mind we wanted to get a closer look at.

Not only were the amount and quality of antelope impressive, but the region seemed to be a wildlife paradise. Just during that evening of scouting we came across some huge elk along with mule deer, whitetail and turkeys sometimes all within the same field.

On opening day, we woke to a crisp and beautiful fall morning. There was a slight chill in the air and the wind had relented from the night before. I couldn't eat much for breakfast as I was too anxious to get out and get a closer look at the bucks we had made note of the evening before. Guy and I hopped in his truck and set out to check out some of the bucks from the evening before and hopefully, some

bigger bucks we had yet to see. Along the way he pointed out where he had shot his Boone and Crockett buck a few years back. I could tell he and Ike have some great memories from this annual antelope hunt. Opening morning we looked over many good bucks. Some of the bucks had good mass, some with length and some with nice prongs, but we hadn't found one that really sparked our interest as the quality of buck we were after. I was able to learn a lot from Guy on field judging antelope, which can be one of the toughest animals to judge trophy quality on. We were looking for a goat with mass first, followed by length, and ideally, one that had it all.

Around noon we took a break to have a sandwich and regroup. After our break, Guy glassed what appeared to be a really nice buck some distance away. We got the spotting scope on him and he had the heavy bases and the length we were looking for but had one prong that appeared to be busted off. We were glassing him from quite a distance so we decided to drive around the backside and get a closer look at this buck. We drove the two-track and made our way around to where we thought we



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could get a closer view of this buck. As we reached the area where we thought he was bedded, Guy was glassing off to our left as I was scanning the right side looking for any other bucks in the area. That's when I spotted one that caught my eye. He was bedded around 350 yards from where we were.

"How about that one?" I said.

Guy brought up his binoculars, took a split second look and told me, "You need to shoot that buck! I mean I don't want to tell you what to do, but you should shoot that buck!"

After looking over numerous good, quality bucks we had found a great buck, one that had everything I was looking for in a trophy antelope. He had the mass, the length and the prongs. We quickly scrambled as I got my rifle and Guy got the video equipment ready. We closed some of the distance and got to a spot that offered a clear line of sight. I got set up and as I found him in the scope I admit I was feeling some buck fever.

The buck was now standing with his eye on us and getting nervous. He started to move so I waited for him to clear some brush and turn broadside when I squeezed off the first shot. After a quick follow-up shot, my first trophy antelope was down! As we walked up to him, he was exactly the caliber of buck I had been hoping for and I could not have been happier. It was a truly enjoyable hunt and one that I will have great memories of for years to come. It was great being able to share a hunt with Guy and Ike and I am sincerely thankful to them and everyone at Eastmans' for allowing me this great hunting opportunity. 



GEAR LIST

Firearm Browning X-Bolt .300 Win. Mag. | **Scope** Nikon Monarch 5-20x44 | **Ammo** Barnes VOR-TX TTSX 180 grain | **Binoculars** Zeiss Terra ED 10x42 | **Clothing** Sitka Gear | **Boots** Lowa Renegade | **Pack** Badlands X1 | **Rangefinder** Sig Sauer K102000 | **Knife** Outdoor Edge

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: I was the 2017 Eastmans' digital subscription hunt winner. I am a dentist and live in Nebraska with my wife Tiffany and two kids, Raylen and Leo.

Gear Giveaway see page 4.

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FATHER KNOWS BEST

BIG DREAMS about my 2017 elk hunting season began in April when I found out that I had been drawn for a limited entry bull tag for an area near my hometown. A few weeks into Montana's bow season my dad got me permission to bow hunt a property I had never set foot on before. My buddy Jake and I got to the ranch we were hunting an hour before shooting light and as we started walking in we could hear elk bugling all around us. The plan was to get up above where the elk were feeding during the night and be ready for them to come through on the way to their bedding area. After a 45-minute walk, we found a spot to wait for the elk and as luck would have it, we spotted a large string of elk making their way in our direction.



The elk ended up going up a trail 200 yards away from us. We continued to watch in amazement as bulls kept coming out of the woodwork and joining in on the rut fest that was happening 500 yards away from us. We sat watching the elk for a couple hours until they got onto a neighboring property and went out of sight. Although we never got to bow range of the elk, Jake and I were very excited.

That afternoon we sat until dark in the spot we had picked out. We were

let down, but we weren't ready to give up.

The next morning brought more bugles during our hike in the dark. We got to our point with time to spare and could make out the dark silhouettes of elk coming straight for us. The lead cow was very suspicious, but she walked within five yards of us. That evening we were back at it and saw a lot of elk, including some great bulls, but never got within bow range.

The next day after work we found a small group of elk up below some rims. We ended up working our way in front of the group while they were coming down to graze for the night. One of

the bulls was a monster that Jake and I guessed to be within the 360 range. Just before the end of daylight we called two of the bulls' cows to 20 yards, but the big bull hung up at 70 yards.

The next evening brought much of the same. Jake and I worked our way into the elk as they came down the small draw. The massive bull from the night before was in the group and excitement was high. We decided to be more aggressive than the night before, but the end result was the same. We were unable to get that incredible bull, but we were both ecstatic for the opportunity.

The next opportunity I had to

By this time the bull that had been hiding in the trees stepped out.

go out was the second weekend of November in the middle of Montana's rifle season. My dad and I went out and were on the glass at daylight. After glassing with no luck, we started covering country looking for any elk or fresh sign. During our long walk through the snow we found some elk tracks but no elk.

On the second day my dad and I decided that we should check out the coulee where we found tracks the day before. As I worked my way down the ridge and through a small opening I made a quick glance across the large draw and spotted what I was looking for elk! The three bulls I saw were not the class that I wanted to use my tag on, so I hiked back up to my dad.

When I got to my father the three bulls had made their way into the opening about 800 yards across the drainage from us. One of the bulls was nice. He had long sweeping main beams and strong brows, but was broken up on top. The other two bulls in the opening were young. A fourth bull was hung up in the cover still and all we could make out was his large light blonde body.

My dad had been glued to the bull that didn't want to make his way into the opening yet, until finally he said, "He's a shooter!"

I directed my attention to the bull still milling around in the trees but all I could tell was that he had a large frame. My dad was very excited and insisted that I at least try to get a shot at him. I knew my dad was almost always right when it came to elk, so I listened and started working my way closer to the bulls.

The snow I was walking in was painfully crunchy as I tried to move along in silence. As I neared 550 yards, the broken-up bull in the lead started to get nervous and kept looking my

Dad said, "he's a shooter!"



way. By this time the bull that had been hiding in the trees stepped out. He had a huge boxy frame and made my heart beat fast.

The large-framed bull started making his way across the small opening. Still not sure that I wanted to punch my tag yet, I decided to load my gun and get ready to shoot anyhow. As soon as I sat down and put my scope on the bull everything happened fast.

The bull was nearing the edge of the opening and I knew I had to either shoot or risk never seeing him again. I told myself that if the crosshairs landed perfectly I would take the shot. BOOM.

When the gun went off the bull I shot at jumped and ran into cover. I stood up, a thousand thoughts racing through my head. I thought I had blown my opportunity at a bull of a lifetime.

When I reached my dad, he was thrilled. He quickly explained to me

that I had hit the bull I was shooting at and that he laid down not 10 yards from where I last saw him. My dad was so impressed with the size of the bull. Seeing how excited he was for my success made my entire hunt worth it. My dad is the one who taught me how to hunt elk and shoot. He is the sole reason I got that elk and I'll never forget that day.



GEAR LIST

Firearm Remington 700 SPS Stainless .300 Win. Mag. | **Scope** Vortex Viper HS-LR 6-24x50 FFP | **Ammo** Handloaded Hornady ELD-X | **Binoculars** Vortex Razor 10x42 | **Clothing** KUIU | **Boots** Schnee's Beartooth Insulated | **Pack** Timber Ridge | **Rangefinder** Leica 1000R | **Knife** Schrade | **Game calls** Elk Inc. Power Bugle, Primos Imaka-da-bull-crazy

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Chance was born and raised in Big Timber, a small town in south-central Montana. He graduated from Montana State in Bozeman and works for Stephens Machine and Welding, a small machine shop in Big Timber. He never turns down an opportunity to chase elk, whether for himself or his friends.

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see page 4.

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My brother and I have been exclusively bowhunting since 2007. We love chasing rutting mule deer during the first two weeks of January. There really is no better way to start your year.

My busy season at work runs from March until October, and it makes scouting very difficult. We did have years of hunts to draw from though, as well as digital scouting for new areas with Google Earth and some of the new hunting mapping apps. I spent tons of time trying to find access to areas that most people might



think is private or blocked off, as this technique has worked in the past.

The summer absolutely blew by and we found ourselves in October. My dad, brother, and a cousin who also happened to have a tag were able to make a trip down on a Saturday to a new area that we thought could hold some big deer. Satellite imagery really didn't do it justice, as the feed and water situations were excellent.

Opening morning found us on the flats of the desert floor before the sun was up. We were in the truck and made it to where we wanted to

be, but when we got there, some other hunters were on the side of the ridge that we planned on hunting. We decided to hunt the other side of the ridge, which opened up into a monstrous canyon with mesquite-filled arroyos and cat claw thickets on the flats in between the canyon walls. The hillsides were mainly tall yellow grass with juniper trees and cholla cactus.

We got back in the truck to find another spot where we could glass a lot of country and maybe catch some deer out in the open feeding or on

their way to bed. This was a stop-really-fast-and-glass-through-the-dirty-window kind of stop, because we really just wanted to make it to the back of the canyon and climb out on top and get to some places that most people aren't willing to go. Generally, in the places that we hunt, if you can see your truck you need to keep going. The lone hill was too tempting though, and we began to glass really quickly.

I began to run my glass down the long slope of the hill that had just become visible. Right before the slope dipped into an arroyo I saw something

shining, running parallel to the ground. It looked like a deer's back shining in the sun. The rest of the animal was covered by mesquite, if it was even an animal... I stared with my 10x50 binos for what seemed like forever waiting for it to move. It didn't. I was about ready to move my field of view to another spot when it happened. It MOVED. The deer picked its head up and looked around. I was pretty sure that I could see antlers shining, too.

I set up my 20-60x spotting scope and began looking for him again. After about five minutes I found the deer again a little farther up the slope and on the other side of the little draw. There were three bucks. Little buck, little buck, and...WHOA.

The problem was that they were higher than us and there was nothing but level ground and short mesquite bushes for a seemingly endless expanse of yards between us. Surely this old dinosaur wouldn't let us just saunter over and take a plink at him, right? I've never been one to overthink anything (or sometimes even plan things out) so I decided to just go for it.

We made it to the clump of mesquites, and the bucks were still there. There was one lone juniper tree 450 yards up ahead, right in between us and the bucks. The crawl/duck-walk to that tree seemed to take ages, but we made it! I chambered a round and found the buck in my scope. That's when I noticed how huge this deer's body was. He made those other bucks look like fawns. Finally, my crosshairs settled on his shoulder and I began to squeeze the trigger...

The recoil of the rifle surprised me, which was a good sign. But I had come off the shooting sticks and couldn't find the deer.

Then I heard my brother say, "YOU GOT HIM! HE'S DOWN! HE FELL OVER

BACKWARDS!"

I was ecstatic, but the feeling soon faded as my brother said, "Wait...he's getting up..."

He was just about to go out of sight when I let another shot ring. We heard that tell-tale "thud" and he kicked as he went around the side and out of sight.

We made our way around the edge to where the bucks had gone. After about 15 minutes a small group of javelina from earlier that morning began to feed up our hillside, headed right for that rocky, brushy spot where we presumed the buck to be. The largest of the javelina made its way behind one of those juniper trees when it sounded like a bomb went off on that hillside. A javelina exploded one way and my buck came out of the other side of that tree.

He ran a few yards and disappeared behind another tree. I made my way to where I might be able to see him. One last shot and he rolled down the hill and my hunt was over.

My dad had watched the whole thing through the spotting scope. He walked up to us and our cousin that also had a tag came over from the next canyon to help us pack him out. My cousin scored my buck on the tailgate of the truck. The buck was 11 years old, teeth worn down to o

nothing. He is 29 1/4" wide and scores 179 2/8 SCI.

A big rack pales in comparison to the blessing of having amazing hunting partners. I am incredibly grateful for a father who taught me to love the outdoors, and for a brother that keeps me laughing the whole hunt, even when the hunting isn't that great. They're the reason I continue to take the punishment of the desert every year, and I look forward to many more years of adventures.



GEAR LIST

Firearm Browning A Bolt Medallion .300 Win Mag | **Scope** Burris | **Ammo** 180 grain | **Binoculars** Vortex Viper HD 10x50 | **Spotting Scope** Vortex Viper | **Rangefinder** Vortex Ranger 1000 | **Shooting Sticks** Vanguard | **Clothing** KUU, First Lite | **Boots** Danner | **Pack** Horn Hunter Full Curl System | **Knife** Outdoor Edge, Havalon | **GPS** onXmaps



SCORE: 179 2/8

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: I grew up hunting the southwestern portion of New Mexico and southeastern Arizona. When I am not in the woods I am killing bugs as the General Manager at Urbanex OKC. Married to my best friend, Roxy.

Gear Giveaway
see page 4.



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RISEING

From the

ASHES

Five years ago, I lost my home and almost all of my possessions in the Waldo Canyon Fire of Colorado Springs. This loss included a lifetime collection of hunting trophies which were reduced to ashes. My first inclination was to never hunt or put a trophy on the wall again. My wife was the first one to tell me to get out there and start over again. So, at 60 years of age and as part of my



“The next day was day eight and the last day of our scheduled hunt...”



CRAIG ANDERSON – BHS – CO – GD – PL

after dark, excited and with good news. He had two different groups of rams located. He did not tell me that one group had a ram which he had spotted on an earlier scouting trip that had the "wow factor."

The next day was day eight and the last day of our scheduled hunt, so LB said, "Let's get up at 3 a.m. to get there shortly after sunrise."

We arrived at our location four hours later after traversing a very difficult scree field. We scanned the location where LB had put the rams to bed but they were gone. He crawled down the ridge to see

healing process, I started to hunt again. However, I was not so sure I would ever put anything on the wall again.

This spring, to my surprise, I received my long-coveted Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep tag in the mail. The area is designated wilderness and only accessible by horseback ride or a much longer backpack trip to the sheep location.

I immediately contacted LB Mullin of West Elk Wilderness Outfitters and we came up with a plan: scout over the summer season and get into the best sheep shape that I could. I ate healthy, hiked as much as possible, and practiced with my rifle out to 400 yards.

Finally, the day came for our nine-day hunt and after a long horseback trip we arrived at basecamp. The hike out of camp every day included a 2500 ft. gain in elevation to the ridge that we later named Heartbreak Ridge. I learned to just look at the next 50 yards, catch my breath and not look at the total distance. Once up on top we had a tremendous view from an observation point. We spent a lot of time behind glass scouring the mountainsides for sheep.

The next few days were extremely discouraging because we could not locate even one ram. By day seven we knew we had to change something. My guide decided to get up early by himself to locate some rams while I took my usual location at our observation point. I did not see a ram all day, again, but LB came back well

ON HUNT

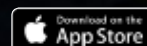
The call of the wild is in all of us ... It provokes that first solo exploration, whether at 16 or 60. It propels us to ridgelines, highlines, coastlines, high crags, deep crannies, those spaces and moments when our heart forges ahead, because our head says, "No way."

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one small part of the drainage to get a viewpoint that we could not see and immediately signaled me to come to his new location. By the time I carefully picked my way to that part of the ridge the sheep were starting to move. I set up as quickly as possible but had difficulty finding the ram with my binoculars or in my riflescope. It is amazing how camouflaged a bighorn sheep is in a boulder field.

By the time I did set up my tripod and was ready for the shot my ram was 400 yards away. I took a shot and LB said I missed and was a little high. Again, I had trouble finding the sheep in the boulder field but LB said he was moving closer and was now at 350 yards. This time he presented a nice broadside pose. When I fired the second shot I hit him a little father back than I wanted but he ran downhill and piled up pretty quickly. I watched through my binoculars for a while to make sure he was not going to get up, then I sat back with all the emotions of elation and

relief and proceeded to cry like a grown man should not do.

My guide was down the mountain and I soon followed. I was so excited that I was not as careful as I should be and grabbed the wrong rock which broke a finger in my left hand as I slipped and took a pretty good tumble. Except for the broken finger all I had were a few bumps and bruises. LB came up and asked if I was OK and helped me splint my finger. As we did this he told me that the ram was actually over a full curl on the right side and broomed back to 7/8 on the left side. It was the one that he had seen earlier in the summer. He had nice mass that he carried out along his horns and the broomed tips only added to his character.

I finally got down to the ram and was totally amazed at the size and beauty of this animal. I took a 360 degree look around where this ram lay and told myself how lucky I was to be here in such an inspiring location of rim rocks above me

and seemingly endless mountain ranges below me.

We caped and quartered the ram and then hauled it down the mountain until we got to tree line where we could get the mules to pack it back to camp. I was too exhausted to even think about walking back to camp. So, one of the wranglers brought an extra horse for me to ride. We ate sheep tenderloin and back strap by the campfire that night. I do not think I have ever eaten a better meal.

This bighorn sheep ram mount will always be a wonderful reminder of an incredible hunt for me. I have been extremely lucky in the last few years in shooting some trophy animals. Since I lost all of my trophies in the fire I have managed to put a nice mule deer, whitetail deer, antelope, moose and a Dall's sheep back on the wall. I am truly blessed that my family has allowed me to heal in pursuing my hunting passion.



Not even a house fire could burn out Craig's passion for hunting.

GEAR LIST

Firearm Remington 700 stainless steel .300 Ultra Mag | **Scope** Leupold | **Ammo** Federal 180 grain Trophy Bonded Bear Claw | **Binoculars** Swarovski EL 10 x 42 | **Spotting scope** Leupold | **Clothing** Cabela's | **Boots** Lowa | **Pack** KUIU | **Range finder** Leupold | **Knife** Havalon | **GPS** Garmin | **Shooting sticks:** Bog Pod tripod | **Tent** REI Basecamp | **Sleeping bag** Wiggy's

OUTFITTER INFO: West Elk Wilderness Outfitters - Cell 970-275-2089

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Craig is a lifelong hunter and lover of the outdoors and is looking forward to his next adventure. He is a retired Army nurse anesthetist and a longtime resident of Colorado, backpack hunter with a drive to be successful.

Gear Giveaway
see page 4.



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"I had been glassing for about a half-hour when I noticed movement in the creek bottom."



MA TTERS

"There goes a big whitetail buck!"

These were the words I exclaimed in the pre-dawn light opening morning of the eastern Colorado plains deer season. The rancher and I had just driven over a small hill and caught this buck out in the open. He was traveling from a pasture to the timber in the creek bottom below us.

We were not prepared for this, so he made it safely to the timber. No worries. We were going to a high hill that overlooks a huge portion of the creek bottom surrounded by large meadows and huge

cottonwood and willow trees. I got my spotting scope out and both of us started glassing for deer. Deer were everywhere, both mulies and whitetails. We never did see the big buck.

It was late October, but the rut for this part of the state does not kick in until late November and most of the big bucks were still traveling alone. We spent the better part of the morning glassing different areas of the ranch, seeing a lot of young bucks but nothing that I wanted to shoot. The evening hunt revealed the same results

and one nice 160" muley.

Sunday morning as I stepped out of the camper, I was greeted by lots of stars overhead and 30 degrees. Perfect weather for a deer hunt. The rancher and I headed back to the same hill. Once again, lots of deer but not what I was looking for. We decided to head east up the creek to another vantage point overlooking the creek to the north.

Just about the time we got there I spotted a deer moving in the creek bottom that was carrying some nice antlers. We

HARDCOVER

2018

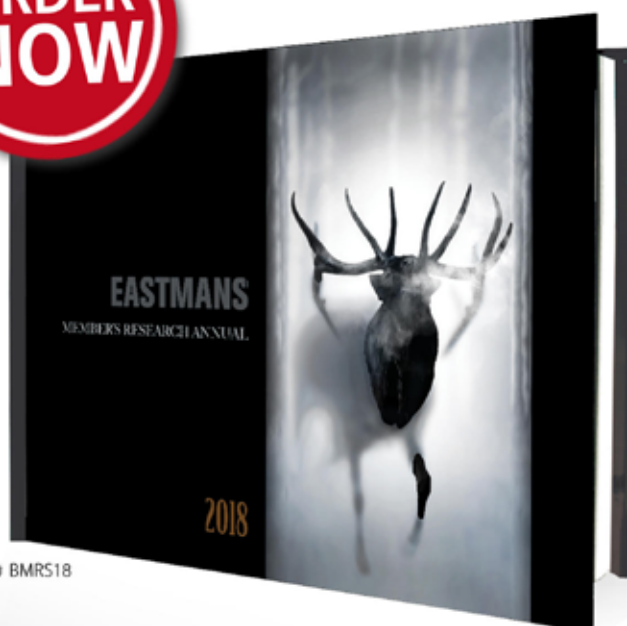
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stopped the truck and I got the spotting scope setup.

I told the rancher he was a big whitetail buck, and he said, "You sure that isn't a muley?"

We watched the buck to see what he was going to do. I wasn't sure if he was going to head into the timber to bed down or move up the creek. After a half-hour he started walking straight west up the creek in a slow walk. I knew of a bedding ground west of that buck's travels and had a hunch that is where he was going. I have been on this ranch before and know all the good bedding grounds and waterholes.

The rancher and I came up with a game plan. I told him I wanted him to take me back west about a mile where I was going to drop into the creek and get set up. If that buck continued west it was going to walk straight into me. He dropped me off and I walked down into the creek bottom. He told me before leaving to shoot straight and call if I got him.

I needed a good strategy that would allow me to get a shot at this buck. Which way would he come? I looked back to the east and knew I had to get to a vantage point to see this buck coming. If I got too deep into the creek I was faced with the dilemma of thick timber and possibly not getting a shot off. I finally found a spot that would allow me to see most of the openings in the timber and the clearings.

I set up my shooting sticks and glassed each opening that this buck might show up in. I took my rangefinder and started marking distance points for yardage. I

then realized there was a large opening just west of the timber. I thought surely he would not go across but stay inside the timber. It was 450 yards to the edge of that opening. I was set up and ready.

I had been glassing for about a half-hour when I noticed movement in the creek bottom. I saw antlers and when I put the binos on them it was my buck. He was moving through the timber towards the clearing! Ugh, not the direction I wanted him to go. He got to the edge of the clearing and I had him dialed in on the scope. My rangefinder said 427 yards.

My shooting sticks are my best friend. I got the crosshairs on the buck and when he turned broadside I squeezed the trigger. That shot dropped him to his knees but he did not go down. I knew I had made a good lung shot on him, but I racked another one. The only shot I had was a quartering shot. I sent another round that entered his left flank and went all the way through him, breaking his right front shoulder. He collapsed at the shot. I watched him through the scope to make sure he was not getting up.

When I first glassed this buck, I knew he had some serious mass, when I walked up on him I realized

SAFARI CLUB INTERNATIONAL METHOD 17-T ENTRY FORM

For white-tailed deer with typical antlers. Antlers that have one or more non-typical times may be measured as typical at the owner's request, but only the typical times will count in the score. Any non-typical times are to be recorded as supplemental information.

Animal Remorsement: ☒ Yes ☐ No Former Score: _____ Record No.: _____

Date Taken: _____ Approx. Day/Time: _____

Place Taken: _____ County: _____ State: _____

Locality: _____

Guide: _____

I. Length of Main Beam 23 3/4 = 24 5/8

II. Length of Typical Times

T-1	5 1/4	5 1/4
T-2	1 1/4	1 1/4
T-3	10 3/4	10 3/4
T-4	4 1/4	4 1/4
T-5	1 1/4	1 1/4
T-6	1 1/4	1 1/4
T-7	1 1/4	1 1/4
Subtotal	32 3/4	32 3/4

III. Circumference of C-1 5 1/4 = 5 1/4

C-2 5 1/4 = 5 1/4

C-3 6 1/4 = 6 1/4

C-4 5 1/4 = 5 1/4

Subtotal 22 1/4 = 22 1/4

IV. Inside Span of Main Beams 18 3/4

V. Total Score 173 1/2

Measured in Velvet: ☒ Yes ☐ No

Supplemental Information

Length of non-typical times, if any, that to be included in total score:

NT-1	1 3/4	5 9/8
NT-2	1 1/4	2 3/8
NT-3	1 1/4	1 1/4
NT-4	1 1/4	1 1/4

Number of Typical Points (all special does plus beam tip) 5 = 5

Number of Non-typical Points (all non-typical does) 1 = 2

Total Number of Points (all does plus beam tip) 6 = 7

Signature: Tammy Scott

Date Measured: 1/13/18 Measured By: MM #201

E-mail: thepdopeygirl@yahoo.com

Signature: [Signature]

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GEAR LIST

Firearm In Rut Custom Rifle .300 Win Mag Left Handed | **Scope** Zeiss HD5 Conquest Rapid-Z 800 | **Ammo** Custom Berger 168 grain VLD | **Binoculars** Vortex Razor 12x50 HD | **Spotting scope** Vortex Razor HD 27-60X 85mm | **Clothing** Cabela's ZONZ | **Boots** Nevados | **Rangefinder** Leica LRF 1200 | **Knife** Mitch Strasia Custom Knives | **Shooting sticks** Caldwell Dead Shot Field Pod

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Les is a proud veteran of the U.S. Armed Services who is now a rodeo announcer and an auctioneer.

Gear Giveaway
see page 4.



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This year started out like any other previous year, filling out the license application for Colorado knowing the odds of me successfully drawing a Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep ram tag were very remote. After nine years, I fully expected to see that my upcoming results would show "Unsuccessful" with three points plus seven weighted points.

Checking out the Parks & Wildlife website on May 18th, sure enough, I did not draw the tag.

I didn't see any reason to do any scouting with my oldest son. He absolutely loves hunting and fishing. We decided to spend more time hiking with the family, camping, and doing some creek and alpine lake fly fishing instead. I also enjoy mountain biking with my middle son

Well, how things can change. While sitting next to my wife on a bench in the elementary school of my youngest son on Friday, August 19th, I received an email. A hunter had returned his license and my name was next on the list. I was stunned. I turned and looked at my wife.

"What is it?" she asked in a concerned voice.

I told her and said the season started in less than a month and the logistics

BETTER

§ THAN THE §

LOTTERY

"I was stunned. I turned and looked at my wife. 'What is it?' she asked in a concerned voice."



were overwhelming.

My wife just looked at me and said, "Go."

It's always great to have a supporting wife.

The next morning, I sent an email to Geneva Park Outfitters. That evening I had a reply that said to contact Matt Schneider, the owner, and that I absolutely shouldn't pass up the rare tag.

Matt had quickly decided that Todd Clark would be the best guide for me. September 18, I met up with Todd and his son the night before my planned hunt

date and headed to his house. After some camp talk, looking at his trophy mounts and pictures of rams from previous clients and acquaintances, it was time to get some rest. Sleeping was broken at best. I was hours away from starting a hunt that most never get to touch. What was the unit going to look like? Where we going to see rams? Would the weather hold out?

Morning came, and I was up before the alarm went off. After a bite to eat and getting lunch and snacks packed, Todd, his son and I were heading out the door. We arrived at the trailhead way before

daylight. Even after a couple of miles of hiking the moon was full, bright and beautiful. As the sun started to rise, we stopped occasionally to glass. Our first major stop did not reveal any sheep but a few mulies were out grazing. We hiked a bit further and stopped to sit and do some more glassing. There was a lot of beautiful country to glass. Looking for movement near rocks, in grass patches, wherever.

As we were glassing Todd said, "Let me verify that those are deer."

He got out his spotting scope and said, "Which one do you want to shoot?"

"You must be living right."



"I'm not shooting deer."

I looked through the scope and saw a group of five rams with two being possible trophy shooting size. One showed a nice tight curl but just seemed to be missing something. The second one was a darker, more chocolate color. The bottom of his curl curved down below his jaw line. I like character and his tips were more broomed. After some Q&A with Todd, I

GEAR LIST

Weapon Custom .270 Winchester | **Scope** Swarovski Z5 | **Ammo** Hornady 130 gr. SST | **Binoculars** Leica Ultravid 10x42 | **Spotting Scope** Swarovski | **Rangefinder** Leupold | **Clothing** First Lite, Under Armour | **Boots** Danner | **Pack** Tenzing | **Knife** Gerry Randall (father) custom fixed blade

OUTFITTER INFO: Geneva Park Outfitters

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Gregg is a husband to a loving wife that is trying to understand the addiction of hunting. He is the proud father of three active boys, 15, 14, and 6 and enjoys filling the freezer with good, clean, wild game.

decided this ram was worth more effort and became my quest.

Now that we had identified the ram, how were we going to get up to him? Option one, get up above them with the wind in our face and assume a reasonable shooting distance. I didn't want to take a shot beyond 400 yards. Option two, follow a small run-off drainage directly below them, hope that we are out of sight for most of the way and that the thermals did not bust us.

We started with Option one and started hiking back down the trail. After about a mile, we stopped to get another look at the terrain. This plan would leave me with a 500 to 600-yard shot.

Option two was our game plan now. We hiked back up the trail and were near our first glassing point when Todd noticed that the sheep saw us. We decided to rest and take a lunch break. Hopefully within that time the sheep would not see us as a threat and continue grazing. Sure enough, right when we were almost finished with lunch the sheep moved off and out of our sight. We reassembled and got our packs back on. This was going to be a 1500-yard

hike straight up.

We used any rocks we had to hide us. Then we were out of large rocks. With about 600 yards between us and the rams, we removed our packs. After 100 yards we were going to need to kneel and belly crawl. Belly crawling is interesting at about a 45-degree incline. We were able to crawl inch by inch until I was able to get within 300 yards of my ram. I was able to successfully harvest it and was thankful with the wind conditions that I wasn't any further away.

As we walked up to this beautiful and respected ram, I couldn't believe it. Late notice of a returned license. Weather sunny and nice. One day harvest of a great ram. Even Todd commented, "You must be living right." I don't know about that but the Man Above was shining on this day.



Gear Giveaway see page 4.



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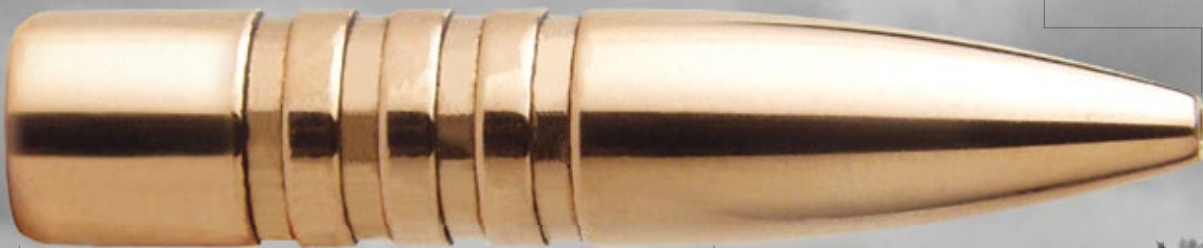


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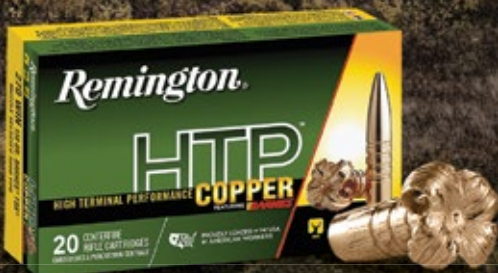
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That was the beginning of the final stalk on a legendary bear. However, the story goes back three years during a Stone’s sheep hunt in the Besa. A successful hunt in several ways, not only did I take a nice heavy ram but all the grizzly tracks caught my interest enough to book a hunt with Besa River Outfitters. Due to tag distribution, the hunt was canceled twice, but the third year it was a go! However, the government announced a shutdown of grizzly bear hunting in British Columbia

starting in November. I still had time.

Cid Cacioli, my guide and good friend, shares stories of the countless times their cabins were destroyed and the numerous animals that died from grizzly in the area. Cid explains that there were two large bears that had no fear of man or beast. One of the bandits was black and the other was pure chocolate. During my sheep hunt, I bumped into the big, black grizzly down on the Besa River. His face was scarred and he walked with an attitude. Two Canadian residents, father and son, passed through camp to hunt grizzly and were warned about a mean grizzly up the ridge. They ignored the warning and paid the ultimate

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HE WALKED WITH
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For some perspective,
the author is 6'5" tall.



About the Author | Rick coproduced Northwest Hunter TV and assisted with Wild Outdoor Adventures TV for 15 years combined. He invented the Gerber EZ Open blade and is currently manufacturing the Ultra-Light Bino Harness.

price. The father died, and his son was transported to the hospital.

It was late September 2017 and it seemed the temperature and leaves were falling at an equal rate. The elk were vocal and in full rut, some of the guys in camp had filled moose and elk tags, but nobody had seen either large boar. There was a fresh caribou kill lodged in the middle of the river that was gone the next day, perhaps the work of our big grizzly. Every night we hobbled our horses to keep them close, each morning we searched.

Day 4: We stalked in close to what looked like a shooter. The forest canopy came all the way to the floor and the ground cover grabbed your ankles with every step. It was thick, right where you would find a big bear, and we did. The hump of the bear looked huge. When the grizzly lifted its head it filled my 10x42 glasses with hair. At 45 yards that can happen. A second head popped up and then a third! Holy smokes! This was a giant sow with two over-sized cubs. All three bears lifted their noses and curled them back.

Cid whispered, "Back out now."

Day 5: After a fresh cup of mountain coffee and a full day in the saddle we

reached our viewing point deep in the region. Leaving our horses to feed, we quickly walked the ridgeline, glassing every open patch we crossed. Our efforts paid off, there was a bear over 1000 yards away. We closed the gap as fast as possible and at some point my shooting sticks fell out. Slowing our pace to a crawl, we could feel the presence of a bear. He was bedded at 600 yards and after a good look we agreed this was the big chocolate boar, yes, the big bear that had been raising hell with anything in his path for several years. Saying he was big is a gross understatement, he was a tank mounted on claws. Even laying down you could see his girth was abnormal for an interior mountain grizzly.

Shooting a dangerous game animal is not something I recommend without the proper rifle and load. My .338 Edge is pushing a 300 grain Sierra Match King bullet that has done me well on large mammals. Now, I was going to launch it at a 1000 lb. grizz. What's an Edge?

The scope was cranked to its favorite position, and the grizz was getting restless. I gave my back and neck a break and then it happened. The big boar stood and the safety slid

forward, my index finger brushed the side of the trigger, finding its place. Three years of planning - SEND IT. I do, and the audio confirms the hit. The grizz responds with a vicious snap and guttural roar. He dives off his bed, rolling head first into the tall spruce, whipping each spruce tree like a rubber stick for the next 50 yards down the mountain. Then everything came to a stop. Silence echoed! Is that possible?

The ravens were the only thing left moving besides me straightening my back. We let 45 minutes pass just to make sure he was dead.

He's not, are you kidding me?

The countdown is quick - 3, 2, 1, BOOM and another confirmed hit. The grizz dives into another small patch of spruce and doesn't come out. With only 30 minutes of daylight left, time and patience are both thin. Walking down there in the dark is not on our bucket list. We choose to spend the night on the mountain and recover the bear in the morning. He's dead right? I sure hope so...

Walking in the spruce patch with a loaded firearm by my side, I go left and Cid goes right. It's thick, real thick. We speak out loud with each step, keeping

OUTFITTER INFO: Besa River Outfitters

Gear Giveaway
see page 4.



biggamebags.com

GEAR LIST

Weapon .338 Edge Remington action | **Scope** Nightforce 5.5 x 22 x 56 | **Ammo** Hand loads | **Binoculars** Swarovski 10 x 42 ELR | **Spotting Scope** Swarovski ATA 65 | **Rangefinder** Leupold | **Shooting sticks** Old Stony Point | **Tent** Hilleberg Tents | **Clothing** King's Camo | **Boots** Kenetrek Guide | **Pack** Stone Glacier | **Knife** Gerber EZ Open - Rick's design



in contact with each other and then the words came out...

"I found him."

"Thank God."

The bear easily made the B&C record book in the top 10. He was estimated to be 25 years old. We counted 11 grizzly bears in five days

of all age classes, which supports management well done.

Social media ran the post of my grizz to the top of the flag pole (viral response) and the anti-groups from Canada and the U.S. attacked me and my family with death threats and bad will, tying up all my phone and fax lines.

Three television networks called several times a day wanting an interview. Post cards arrived and emails were nonstop with horrible comments. I chose to go dark and shut everything down in the office for two weeks or more. That worked and slowly I crawled out from under a rock.



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Time was of the essence for this tag.

SHORT



SEASON

I scouted my area for two months before I got drawn for the tag, putting up cams and getting to really know the area. I drew this same tag back in 2016 and produced a mature 185" buck so I was ready to go out there and get another monster buck.

I wanted this early season tag because my wife was going to be deployed during the regular season, we are both active duty Air Force, so time was of the essence for this tag. I found out that I drew the tag at the same time I saw a nice buck on my trail cam that I could hunt. Work took me out of state for the season opener. I rushed home to spend some time with my wife and son and then left the next day. I packed enough food for roughly eight days, with four days in my EXO pack and the rest in my truck if I needed it.

I headed up Saturday evening and stopped at Jack in the Box for my pre-hunting ritual of four tacos. I drove up into the Boise Mountains as fast as I could because the light was fading. There wasn't any parking on the trail, so I asked some campers if I could park near their campsite, and luckily, they said yes. I then drove my dirt bike on the single-track trail up the mountain

until I had to stop on the top of the ridge and park it. I hiked in another 2.5 miles through a post-burn area that was choked with downed trees to my spike camp.

By the time I reached my spike camp, it was 8:30 and that meant I had to set up in the dark. After I set up camp, I reviewed my trail cam footage from my scouting season to create a game plan for the following morning. It was a light sleep that night due to the elk trampling around and deer hooves about 50 yards from my tent. I was anxious to get out there. My alarm

went off at 6 am, but when I opened my eyes I saw light coming in. I immediately got up and thought *this is a repeat of 2016*. (In 2016, I woke up late and almost missed my deer heading to his bed.) I got ready so fast that I was unable to eat the breakfast I had so painstakingly prepared. I packed my bag with the essentials for the day, food and water, and headed out.

The ridge I hunt runs north to south and the wind was blowing west

so I stuck to the west side of the ridge in hopes to catch something coming from the east to bed. As I headed down to my glassing spot, I heard what sounded like a branch snapping behind me. I thought it was maybe the wind blowing on the dead trees, but as I stopped and looked around, I spotted antlers a little over 100 yards away. I pulled out my binoculars to get a better look and saw a nice 4-point frame. I immediately thought, this is the buck that's

been on my trail cam, but when I took a better look I saw that it was a different mule deer.

I decided to wait, and I watched as he made his way down. I saw that he had deep forks and nice cheaters on his right side. My heart was racing and at this point, I decided that this was the buck I was willing to take for the season.

The buck was behind some trees and some really thick brush and presented no shot for me. He wasn't in a rush and had no clue I was there. I allowed him to walk down further, hoping to get a shot. By this time, it had



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been 20-30 minutes it seemed, and I was able to calm my nerves completely for a solid shot. He walked into an opening exposing his front shoulders, I squeezed the trigger and as my gun came down, I saw the buck running towards me. His right leg was flailing as he was running, and I thought *was the shot too low?*

By that time the buck saw me, turned around and then hit the dirt. I stayed quiet and waited, upset that maybe my shot wasn't a good one. I didn't hear anything after about 10 minutes, and I decided to walk up to see where he went. He was down 20 feet from me. The view of his antlers was reassurance, my deer season was done in 30 minutes.

I called my wife, she answered, and I yelled, "Buck down!"

After the call, I started the real work. I quartered and caped him out. I loaded up my pack and hung the head/cape on a tree. Idaho is a meat-first state, so I hiked him all the way back to my truck, loaded the ice chest and then headed back in for the rest.



Sometimes you just know it's the right buck when you see it.



GEAR LIST

Firearm Savage Model 111/.270 Win | **Scope** Nikon ProStaff 4-12x40 | **Ammo** Nosler Trophy Grade AccuBond .130gr | **Binoculars** Vortex Diamondback 10x42 | **Clothing** First Lite | **Boots** Crispi Idaho GTX | **Pack** EXO Mountain Gear K2 3500 First Lite Cipher | **Rangefinder** Nikon ACULON AL11 | **Knife** Havalon Baracuta | **GPS** OnXmaps | **Tent** Big Agnes Fly Creek UL2 | **Sleeping bag** Kelty Cosmic Down 20-degree bag

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: I am a 31-year-old father, husband and active duty Air Force, with over nine years of service and have been stationed in Idaho for four years. I grew up in El Mirage, Arizona with a small family of four and hunted upland and big game my whole childhood. I am a public land, do it yourself, backpack hunter with a drive to be successful.

Gear Giveaway
see page 4.



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'SHE KNOWS I'M FULL OF IT AND WILL FIGURE OUT A WAY TO HUNT BIG MULE DEER'

"Well, this is it," I told my wife Debbie. "The last hurrah."

I had now burned all of my mule deer points in all of the western states. Rolling her beautiful eyes, she gestured like she had a microphone recording me. She knows I'm full of it and will figure out a way to hunt big mule deer again someday.

Back in the early '90s I was still pretty young and my passion for hunting big game had grown. Eastmans' Hunting Journal was relatively new and was gaining popularity. One constant message seemed to be applying for quality big game tags throughout the western states. Since then, the rewards for doing just that have been overwhelming. One might say that I'm just lucky, but while luck plays a role, persistence and consistency tip the odds in one's favor.

High quality, limited-entry tags offer only opportunity – an opportunity to take your best trophy because you will be hunting where they are and usually with a very low number of hunters. But there are no slam dunks in harvesting a trophy animal on public land. Most of the tags issued require a lot of time and effort to fill. Since 1990, my quality tags have included elk and Coues' deer in Arizona, antelope and deer in California, deer in Colorado, deer and elk in Nevada, deer in Wyoming and just this year, a moose tag in Idaho and a southeast deer tag in Utah. The Utah hunt was very special and represents 22 years of applying from ages 45 to 67. I was determined to make the most of my hunt come heck or high water.

This hunting unit is hundreds if not thousands of square miles of outlaw country. Rock cliffs surrounding high mesas of sage, serviceberry, bitterbrush and pinion/juniper, deep, nearly inaccessible canyons, rimrock benches and vast deserts dominate the intimidating landscape. Deer numbers are very low and without question, it would be easy to hunt areas where they just don't exist. After all

the Last Hurrah



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the research I completed prior to my hunt, without a doubt, I would have been hunting in all the wrong places without a guide.

On this hunt, deer were transitioning from the high mesas to winter range, sometimes many miles away. This natural migration takes place every year at this time and has nothing to do with weather. In fact, most days we hunted in daytime temperatures in the mid-70s. Mature bucks were hard to find, but they were around. Pinion/juniper/cedar groves are where they normally spend the day, so it was the first and last hours of the day when we had a chance of seeing one.

The morning of the day prior to the opener, a great buck was spotted in a wash in rimrock country that lay below pinion/ juniper hills bordering miles of sage flat. He was a big typical with an extra.

As normal, we hunted him long and hard and as thoroughly as possible. It was clearly a case of looking for a needle in a haystack. I was told prior to the hunt that it would be extremely challenging and only determination to be in it for the long haul would pay off.

About three days into the hunt we got a tip from a friend on a buck they had spotted that was very old and heavy. We found him in the pinion/ juniper the next morning and I was

tempted. He was about as wide as his ears with crabby points, but his bases were nearly the size of coke cans and he was heavy all the way out. Five days we hunted for the big typical but could never turn him up again. As the days slipped away, we were able to witness more and more deer moving in from the higher country. It probably wouldn't be long before a mature buck showed. The reality of it all was that yes, the unit held some of the most magnificent mule deer on earth, but to get one, things must go your way.

Wouldn't you know it, late on the morning of the sixth day and after all the talk about how hard the hunt had been from sun up to

sundown, the hours of glassing and walking rims, I happened to peer back over my shoulder into a shallow, dished-out swale and noticed something that didn't look right. One element of hunting I love the most is that things can change quickly, and it was happening.

Binoculars confirmed that standing out in the wide open on a large flat rock and staring straight down-slope at me was the best buck we'd seen in a week. For a minute, he stood there motionless, looking as regal as can be while my guide Randy and I talked things over.

"Well Tim, you said you like typicals and this guy here is a pretty one."

I had only one day left and it had been a grind just like he had



promised me from the start.

"I like him, give me a range."

He did, and it was quite a poke for me, but I tried my best to settle in and calm down. The buck finally turned broadside only to be shaded by brush. We waited again until he had had enough of us and started off towards the trees. Randy let out a series of voice calls that finally stopped him. Once again, I got him in the scope, steadied the rifle the best I could, then sent one on its way. Down he went and with great relief and appreciation, I just sat there in the sand and gave thanks. Thanks for the opportunity, thanks for a beautiful animal and thanks for yet another fall in the mountains hunting bucks.



GEAR LIST

Weapon: Custom Winchester Pre-'64 Model 70 7MM Rem. Mag. | **Scope:** Zeiss Conquest 2x10 | **Ammo:** Hand loaded 160 gr. Nosler Partition | **Binoculars:** Swarovski 10x42 | **Spotting Scope:** Bushnell Sentry II 32X | **Rangefinder:** Leica | **Clothing:** KUIU, Cabela's and Carhartt | **Boots:** Keen | **Pack:** KUIU | **Knife:** Outdoor Edge Onyx, Havalon | **Shooting Sticks:** Primos | **Sleeping Bag:** Coleman

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: I am 67 years old, the father of four wonderful children, and married to Debbie, the love of my life. I reside in Bridgeport, California and am the owner/operator of a small backhoe business.

Gear Giveaway
see page 4.

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THE LLAMA REPORT:

IT'S ALL DAD'S FAULT!

BY IKE EASTMAN and SCOTT REEKERS



Mike Eastman - 1980's

Knees, back, ankles, shoulders all tend to hurt a little more every year, but the high country and its elusive quarry keep calling every fall. That tends to lead to discussions of how much longer we can keep this up, how much longer we can keep torturing our bodies like this. Surely there has to be a better way to hunt the country we love, extend our range and not destroy every joint in our bodies!

Well, there is, and this year Ike and I put a tried and true method to the test.

Those of you who have used stock for years are probably laughing a little inside.

Let me assure you that to us here at Eastmans', beasts of burden are nothing new. Ike



Mike Eastman - 1980's



Ike Eastman - 2018

spent several years packing with horses for an outfitter in his late teens and early twenties and now he rarely misses an opportunity to throw the saddle over his horse and lead a pack string down the trail. However, this year we had the opportunity to try a method for packing out a trophy mule deer from the high country that Mike Eastman and Albert Ellis shined the spotlight on many years ago in the early '80s. They were in their mid-to-late 30s and 40s when they decided that the low hassle llama was a fantastic animal for the high country. So this year, Ike and I thought, if they did it we can too, and were easily able to access familiar country with

We had the opportunity to try a method for packing out a trophy mule deer from the high country that Mike Eastman and Albert Ellis shined the spotlight on many years ago in the early '80s.

the 300 lb. wooly animals. To say we were impressed would be an understatement. It doesn't hurt that there is a lot of history in the Eastman family using llamas and those of you familiar with the film *Mule Deer Action* know exactly what I am talking about. For the rest of you, I'm sure you are scratching your head and wondering, why don't you just use horses? Well, let's dive into the why and how we decided to visit the archives, literally, and use llamas to haul in all of our gear and pack out a trophy mule deer.



Number one, we are getting older and maybe, just a little wiser, which in turn means that the fewer 100+ lb. pack-outs we have to do the better. According to Scott Woodruff at Lander Llama Company, we could put 70 lbs. on each of the llamas we rented and they would have no problem hauling that on his custom-built saddle/pannier system. I can vouch for that and say that his llamas were in better shape than I was and they hauled 70 lbs. in and out of the backcountry much more efficiently than my two legs ever could.

Even better is that my Eberlestock had a day's food, camera, spotting scope and emergency gear in it. That was it, sub-20 lbs. including pack weight on both excursions like and I took. Ike made the comment after our first scouting mission with llamas that we nicknamed Mike and Albert, in honor of the men who inspired this idea, that he felt like he could head up again that day and not feel any worse for the wear. It's pretty amazing how far you can pack in with little to no weight on your back.

Woodruff also shared with us that on elk hunts he can usually get a boned-out bull elk onto three llamas for short trips. In real world terms this means that you would need quite a few llamas to pack out more than one animal and your pack will get heavier for the way out. When compared to horses though, you can fit three, possibly four llamas in a double horse trailer, which means the cost of fuel would be lower than say hooking up to a giant gooseneck stock trailer.

Speaking of horses, what advantages do llamas have over the larger stock animals? First and foremost, water.

Llamas only need to be watered once a day and they don't drink that much compared to horses, which means you can haul water for them. Yup, we filled a Yeti gallon jug and took it with us on our scouting trip and both animals had enough to extend our glassing session to 48 hours on location. A wise llama user would invest in a collapsible water container and fill up at the last available spot before a climb. On our mid-September hunt we had to make one water run after we set up camp and I was able to do that alone while Ike kept tabs on the bucks we had found. I simply hauled the water up the hill and we, both llamas and humans, were set for the full week we planned to be there.

The next advantage in my mind is agility. Mike Eastman and Albert Ellis trusted these animals in some steep country and to hear Albert speak of the places he took them is mind-blowing. Scott Woodruff confirmed to us that, "If you can go there, they can probably do it too." So, on our scouting trip we

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decided we would test that on a steep pack-out. Sure enough, they were more sure-footed than the both of us. We both had moments of slipping but the llamas remained sure-footed even with panniers loaded to the gills with our gear. I would have never dreamed of doing my best *Man from Snowy River* impression with a horse on that hill, but the llamas took the steep high country basin and ate it for lunch.

Once in camp llamas require little to no attention at all and they function as alarm systems for large predators. If you have spent any time around llamas or their enthusiasts they have probably told you about their alarm call when danger is near. Do yourself a favor and YouTube it, you won't regret it. Unfortunately, Ike and I did not hear them do it in person but it will likely happen once we take them into grizzly country closer to home.

Staking them out is much easier than horses as well. If you have used one of the corkscrew style leashes for your dog in the front yard, then you know what we used to anchor our llamas to camp. Seriously, it's that simple. No 2 lb. hammer to pound a stake into the ground like you bring into the backcountry with horses and no worrying about finding the right setup for high lining them. Screw the stake into the ground, make sure the carabiner is tightly screwed shut and walk away. You will also want to make sure that your llamas can't get tangled together. It never happened to us, but Woodruff told us a horror story or two.

Finally, their tack is very simple. On Brandon Mason's elk hunt I was reminded how complicated it can be to get heavy panniers to behave on top of a sturdy mountain horse and just how high elk antlers can sit. Llamas have a very simple saddle that is anchored with two cinches, one that is anchored over the llama's incredibly thick sternum and the other that is looser across their belly.

As far as disadvantages to horses go, the biggest is amenities. Unless you want to bring in 10 llamas you won't be able to haul large wall tents and wood burning stoves that many associate with horse camps deep in the wilderness.

When you ride in on horses you are only limited to how in shape the horses are and





We owe this trip to the vision of Mike Eastman and Albert Ellis.

hours of daylight you have. You can't ride llamas and therefore you are limited to how in shape you are! Llamas cover between two and three miles per hour which for most of us is a pretty steady pace. Our llamas were in fantastic shape after a full summer of packing into various wilderness areas in Wyoming. Woodruff let us know that we needed to listen for them to huff and puff and make sure that we gave them a break if that happened. We did way more huffing and puffing than they did and if I am completely honest my llama was in better shape than I was.

So will there be llamas spending days in a corral near one of our homes here soon? No, we aren't planning on it. The beauty of renting llamas is that they are an animal that we can pick up on the way out of town and have access to when we need and we won't have to feed every morning. Even better is that when we rent them we don't have to spend the summer getting them in shape; the summer hiking season will take care of that for us.

This trip down memory lane and into the future for us was something we owe to the vision of Mike Eastman and Albert Ellis, a vision that will continue to live on every fall from here on out. Maybe we will see you on the trail next season, llamas in tow.



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THE 6.5 REVOLUTION:

SMALL MEDIUM LARGE



BY TODD HELMS



Say what you will about the massive groundswell around all things 6.5 in the rifle world. From competitive shooting to hunting there is no denying that cartridges pushing those long, skinny and very high B.C. (ballistic coefficient) pills are all the rage at the moment. That said, I had the chance to perform some real world testing of three 6.5mm cartridges these past few months and shine some light on just how each stacked up, both at the range and in the field.

The 6.5s I put through the ringer were small, medium and large. I chose the 6.5 Creedmoor, the 6.5 PRC, and the 6.5-300 Weatherby Magnum. My testing consisted of range testing where I shot each rifle for a best five shot group at 100 yards, fastest three shot steel hits from 200 to 600 yards and then, what matters most to me, on game performance. I chose to use available factory ammunition for this test; Hornady Precision Hunter in both the Creedmoor and PRC with 143 gr. ELD-X bullets and Weatherby Select shooting 140 gr. Norma spitzers for the big boy.

As these were all intended for hunting I wasn't worried about ranges past 600 yards as that is my personal maximum effective range under ideal conditions. While all the rifles and rounds I tested are capable of and produced outstanding accuracy out to 600 yards at the range, this was, overall, a hunt test, so let's get to the meat and potatoes, and see how each fared in the field.



Hike into the public land of Wyoming with Guy Eastman to hunt elk in October. Eastman is hunting DIY style in an elk unit he has hunted before. He locates a monster bull near the end of archery season, but is forced to back out before closing the deal. Can he relocate the monster during the October rifle hunting season?

EPISODE

WYOMING ELK HUNT:
GUY EASTMAN HUNTS
PUBLIC LAND



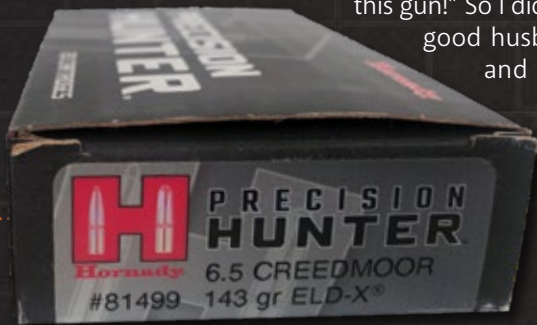


SMALL – 6.5 Creedmoor

The 6.5 Creed is the single hottest round on the planet right now. Not in terms of ballistic profile but popularity. Hunters and shooters both find an awful lot to like in this little round. 6.5s have always "killed bigger than their ballistics," just look at the number of moose the Finns, Norwegians and Swedes have piled up with the Creedmoor's virtual twin, the 6.5x55 Swede. Ernest Hemingway even featured a 6.5 in *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber*, due in large part to his affinity for the caliber while putting it to use in Africa.

Being the smallest of the batch I expected the "little 6.5" to have light recoil and be accurate but what impressed me the most about it was the performance. On the range the 6.5 Creedmoor was an obvious pleasure to shoot. In fact, the recoil is so mild that even at 200 yards I could watch my bullet impact the steel plate and hits at distance were elementary. The 143 grain ELD-X consistently left the muzzle at a shade under 2700 fps and five shot groups were literally one ragged hole. In the field the mild mannered round was devastating. This was a bit more of a surprise because, quite honestly, I was a 6.5 Creedmoor doubter, probably the only one in the Eastmans' office, but still.

My wife and I each took pronghorns with the 6.5 Creedmoor and both of them took exactly zero steps! Each were straight up DRT kills, emphatic is perhaps the correct term and my wife's exact words were, "I like this gun!" So I did what any good husband does and set about getting her a 6.5 Creed of her very own.



- **6.5 Creedmoor** - Perfect for beginners or smaller statured shooters. Ideal pronghorn and deer rifle.
- **6.5 PRC** - Perhaps the best "all around" cartridge of the test. This one will do everything you ask of 6.5mm.
- **6.5-300 Weatherby** - The beast! This is a great open country deer and elk cartridge but will tackle bigger stuff with ease too.

In short, the smallest 6.5mm of the test left me wishing I had more tags to fill with it. The Creedmoor is deserving of the aplomb lathered upon it and the only question is if I will ever get it out of my wife's hands long enough to put it use.

The 6.5 PRC accounted for this Wyoming pronghorn buck.



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MEDIUM – 6.5 PRC

So medium in this instance is relative. The PRC is larger and more powerful than the 6.5 Creedmoor but not as “magnum” as the 6.5-300 Weatherby Magnum, garnering it’s medium designation for this review. Hornady not only played a very large role in developing the round but is the only manufacturer currently loading ammo for it; the 143 gr. ELD-X in their Precision Hunter line is what I chose to run through my test gun. Hornady knew hunters would benefit from a 6.5 “short magnum” that they didn’t have to reload for.

The PRC pushes the 143 gr. ELD-X bullet in the Precision Hunter line of ammunition at an advertised 2950 fps but my particular rifle was a tad slower, this didn’t affect performance though.

The 6.5 PRC was extremely accurate off the bench and from every shooting position I employed at the range. 100 yard five shot groups fell well under half an MOA, in fact the PRC held half to one MOA groups all the way to my furthest test range at 600 yards. As a hunting round the 6.5 PRC was chomping at the bit to prove itself and I couldn’t wait to let it off the leash.

On a perfect October Saturday it didn’t take long to find some pronghorns and my wife settled in for a crack with the PRC. She took a prone position and let the air out of the closest animal at just under 300 yards. One shot, one kill. The antelope never heard the gun and the PRC had accounted for its first blood.

Now it was my turn and I had been waiting for my chance at a nice buck. I found the one I wanted and after a fun stalk I was out of real estate with the buck giving me a perfect shot on the long side of 400 yards. When the rifle barked the buck went down hard as the 143 gr. 6.5mm ELD-X crunched him at over 2350 fps, dumping just shy of one ton of kinetic energy into him. I was impressed and pleased.

So, if the 6.5 Creed is good, the 6.5 PRC is better, right? It depends on what you want to do with it. The PRC will do it all and is a better choice for large game like elk and moose or bears than the 6.5 Creedmoor but by design it is a medium 6.5

and is best used for medium game such as pronghorns, deer and elk.

LARGE – 6.5-300 Weatherby Magnum

Well, it’s time for the big dog of the test! There is no faster or more powerful 6.5mm cartridge being mass produced today than the Weatherby 6.5-300 Magnum. This monster pushes a 140 gr. bullet over 3300 fps making it the “large” in this test of small, medium and large 6.5s.

Speed and kinetic energy are great if you can put them to use by harnessing all those steel plate crushing, game killing numbers and turn them into field reality. The truth is that for many folks huge magnum rounds are simply too much to handle. I did not find this to be the case at all with the big Weatherby 6.5. Recoil was very manageable. In fact, I was quite surprised by how docile this big fella was. That brings me to accuracy. I found the 6.5-300 Weatherby to shoot the 140 gr. Norma spitzers very well. Don’t be confused, this is a hunting round! The rifle and cartridge produced sub-MOA groups at 100 and 200 yards and hovered right around an MOA beyond that out to 600... what more can one ask for in a hunting cartridge? The truly impressive thing to witness was how the 6.5-300 almost tore the steel plates off their hinges upon impact. It is one very powerful round and I was excited to hunt with it.

When called upon, the big Weatherby round hit exactly where I wanted it to, destroying the vitals on the antelope completely and affording a quick, clean harvest. So quick that when I rolled the animal over to inspect the exit what was left of its lungs had been sucked out of the exit hole by the still speeding 6.5 spitzer. To note: this antelope was a shade under 200 yards and the bullet, according to Weatherby’s data, impacted it at over 3k fps. That’s incredibly fast and the results spoke for themselves, a few staggering steps and it was all over.

The 6.5-300 Weatherby Magnum is the 6.5 speed king and there is nothing on the continent it won’t handily tip over, given the proper bullets are used. If you’re looking for a magnum 6.5 that’s more like a death ray than a rifle, then look no further!



So, there you have it; small, medium and large 6.5mm rounds and what they showed me. I don’t think there is a bad one in the batch, they are all accurate and pleasant to shoot and will cleanly take western big game. The only question remaining is, are you part of The 6.5 Revolution?



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OPTICS TECH:

Past, Present & Future

By Matt Suuck

Matt Suuck is a passionate western hunter, making his home in central Colorado. He is also an optics industry veteran, having spent over ten years of his career in various roles for companies like Leica, Zeiss and Minox. During these years, Matt worked in sales, marketing and product development. This experience has given Matt deep insights into sport optics technology, development and history. Additionally, he has worked as a field editor for Eastmans' Hunting Journal in the past, as well as editor of the Wild Sheep Foundation's Wild Sheep magazine.

We live in a world where we are constantly surrounded by technology. The phone in my pocket far outperforms my very first PC I bought in 1996, which was pretty advanced at the time. It truly is the "technology age" and our hunting gear is no exception. Packs, clothing, calls, rifles, bows, you name it, everything has evolved dramatically over the past 10 to 15 years. But no industry has seen a greater explosion in technological advances than that of sport optics.

Optical devices to better see the world have been around since the 17th century, but the history of optics for hunting is a relatively new one. It was not until the late 19th century that hunters in central Europe began looking at optics as an aid to their sporting pursuits. It was in this time that the first more "modern" riflescopes began emerging in Austria, the Porro prism design became the standard for binoculars and the first rangefinder was being developed by the British company,

Barr & Stroud.

Despite the fact that the first functioning telescopic aiming devices to be mounted on firearms came from upstate New York in the 1830's, optics for hunting did not achieve general acceptance in the United States until after World War II. Prior to that time, most American hunters believed optical devices to be too flimsy and unreliable. Following the experiences from World War II, where American GI's witnessed the effectiveness and durability of binoculars and riflescopes in action, American hunters began to look at these aides a bit differently.

In the previous decades, riflescopes made huge technological and mechanical advances, including the introduction of the variable powered scope by Zeiss in 1922. A company more known for measuring devices then launched one of the first American hunting scopes in 1947, when Leupold & Stevens introduced the Plainsman. Leupold would change as a company and become one of the driving forces behind the widespread use of optical devices for hunting in the USA.

The next great advances in optical technology would not come until the 1960's and 1970's. These decades would see the first sealed and thus waterproof (by modern standards water resistant) scopes, plus improved lens designs and coatings technologies. The two greatest optical developments during this time came from Germany.

First in the 1960's, thanks to new prism designs, Zeiss and Leica (then called Leitz) introduced the modern roof prism binocular. These binoculars, with their improved ergonomics, quickly became much more popular amongst hunters than the somewhat cumbersome Porro prism design binoculars of the past. Fast forward to today, and aside from the military, you almost exclusively see roof prism binoculars. Next, in 1973 Steiner introduced the first nitrogen-filled binocular. Hunters now had truly waterproof optics that could withstand even the harshest conditions, further adding to their importance for the sportsman.

During this same time period a new optical device was beginning to emerge. In



Leupold Plainsman

1992 Leica Geovid



2018 Leica Geovid



1964, the first fully functioning laser rangefinder was introduced. Though mainly used for military purposes for the next few decades, this device would later become the catalyst for the optical technology boom we are witnessing today.

Even though Germany already had riflescopes with night vision technology in the 1940's, the true marriage of optics and electronics did not occur until the 1990's. First came the laser rangefinder binocular (1992; Leica Geovid), then the introduction of the illuminated reticle (Zeiss) and finally the laser rangefinder rifle scope (1997; Swarovski LRS).

The new millennium would quickly see fresh and exciting optics technologies in the hands of hunters. Compact laser rangefinders from companies such as Leica, Nikon and Bushnell would quickly become a must-have item for many hunters. For the first time, a vision of the future could be seen. Hunters, myself included, realized how helpful the new electronic devices could be and how we simply did not want to hunt without them.

The technological advances came faster and at ever growing leaps. The next generation of the Leica Geovid launched in 2004 and we now had a true roof prism binocular with an integrated laser rangefinder. The laser rangefinder rifle scope also received a new version. The opto-electronic age had arrived.

Today we have the highest standards in optical- and mechanical performance we could have ever imagined. High-quality optics are also more affordable than ever before, thanks to decreased production costs without a significant loss in quality. Of course today's hunter wants their optics to mirror the "all-inclusive" capabilities of their other tech devices.

Companies such as SIG, Steiner, Vortex, Burris, Leica, Swarovski, Leupold and Zeiss have met this market need. Each company (along with other brands) has married modern technology with the standard optics found in binoculars, riflescopes and laser rangefinders. Blue tooth, USB connections, data apps, etc. are all key components of the new generation of hunting optics. These and other companies have taken sport optics and evolved them into electro-optics.

In the future, we will only have more and not less electronics in our hunting optics. The key common element and goal for the new electro-optics devices is to help increase accuracy and, ideally, limit the amount of poorly taken shots and thus wounded game. The objective of a more humane kill has always been at the heart of any technological evolution in hunting optics, dating back to the first hunting scopes from nearly 140 years ago.

Where hunting optics will go from here is yet to be determined. "Smart scopes" and increased use of digital overlay technology is the most natural next step, which are already in the works. A key component in all of this will be how game laws will adjust. Paragraphs detailing what types of optics and electronics are permissible are already in each state's regulations, with more to come in the future.

Naturally, a discussion is already taking place amongst hunters as to what, if any, limitations we wish to place on hunting optics technology. As when any major change in hunting gear and practices happened previously, we will decide how best to marry the hunting traditions of the past with the technologies of the future.



COLD WEATHER CLOTHING



SITKA COLD WEATHER GEAR | GUY EASTMAN

Sitka Blizzard Parka

Not very often can you say a single piece of gear may have made or broken your hunt. Cramming this beefy parka into my bag when heading to Tajikistan last November was the smartest choice I made on the hunt. With temps well below zero, winds beyond extreme even by Wyoming standards and elevations above 16,000', this coat saved my bacon on one of the toughest landscapes on the planet. A very large Marco-Polo ram may just have been the direct result of the decision to pack this garment.

The parka starts with a very high grade and technically advanced hybrid down insulation component that combines 650-fill down with ultrafine Primaloft fibers in a 60/40 mixture, to create a "best of both worlds" insulating scenario. Top that off with three full layers of thick Gore-Tex membrane faced with a highly durable polyester fabric and you have a shell so heavy duty that even the stiffest of wind is no match. The outer shell is as heavy as my highest quality Gore-Tex waders, and 100% breathable to boot.

Sitka is known for high quality and outstanding design features and this coat is certainly no exception. Equipped with water-sealing cuffs, a drop away hood, and two hand warming pockets, just to name a few, this coat has more bells and whistles than a Purdue homecoming game.

If you find yourself headed into the extreme; Central Asia, Kamchatka, or Montana in December, this coat is a go-to for the worst the world has to offer when it comes to inclement weather.

\$699.00

Sitka Kelvin Lite Vest

If the most extreme of the extreme is not in your near future, one of the most versatile pieces in the Sitka lineup for me when it comes to keeping warm is the Kelvin Lite vest. I find myself literally, nearly living in this vest during the fall months. A perfect piece for cool mornings in September, October cold fronts and every day, all day use in November and December this vest is a great compliment to nearly every situation and clothing system I put to use throughout the fall. The compact size and high-quality construction make this piece a must have for me.

This vest is insulated with the same high quality Primaloft insulation that is found in the Blizzard parka. The insulation in this garment is actually varied throughout the piece with lighter Polartec Alpha insulation under the arms and the heavier Primaloft Silver in the front and back to better regulate your body's natural heat flow. The fit of this vest is near to perfection with very little extra bulk making it fit perfectly and seamlessly underneath nearly any other layers. The shell is a lightweight but very durable Ripstop Poly with a DWR finish.

Although very lightweight this vest has proven to be surprisingly durable and a huge bang for the buck when it comes to weight versus usability in my clothing system.

\$170.00

Both of these pieces can be found at www.sitkagear.com

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FIRST LITE | SCOTT REEKERS

Furnace Henley Merino

The word furnace immediately brings about a feeling of warmth and the mental picture of the last time the furnace kicked in blowing warm air through the vents. The Furnace Henley Merino top has the same effect in cold weather as the heating system in your house. The 350 EXP Merino is heavy to deal with the coldest of cold days in the frigid conditions that the West is known for in the later seasons. First Lite started with merino products and the Furnace Henley top is one of their most comfortable base layer iterations to hit the market. The material's backside has a fleeced look that is soft to the touch and doesn't catch on the skin like heavier other models of heavyweight fleece on the market. First Lite also suggests using this layer on top of their lightweight merino offerings to build a system that will reach even further into the depths of cold weather hunts and extend your comfort rating.

\$145.00

Uncompahgre Jacket

Most puffy jackets are tough to move around in and for good reason: they weren't designed for it. They are designed to keep you warm in frigid temperatures, often when you are being whipped by wind and sleet. The DWR-coated Uncompahgre Jacket from First Lite is built with 37.5 technology and designed to send moisture out while keeping you warm inside. Perfect for those chilly mornings where elevation gain is needed for a better vantage point without sacrificing warmth. The 17 oz. jacket is also cut to make shooting with a bow or rifle possible and the hood also has the shooter in mind with a design that makes looking down any sight easy. The jacket can be stuffed in its own pocket for transport in the backcountry and at \$200.00 it's not going to break the bank.

\$200.00

Both of these pieces can be found at
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High Uintas Vest

Insulated vests are a tough layer to beat in almost any part of the fall hunting season, especially when they are as lightweight as this one. Perfect for insulation under rain gear or puffy jackets, and also to be worn over your base layer in early season for core temperature regulation while being active in the morning and evening hours.

The High Uintas vest by Badlands is an 11 oz. synthetic Du Pont DWR outer layer coated option for the backcountry hunter. On either side of the full-length front zipper are two hand warmer zip pockets to hold necessities that you need readily available inside, or to keep your hands warm on cool mornings behind the spotting scope. The synthetic insulation vest packs down small even with ample insulation in all areas including the collar trapping heat in as it rises from the body while the cinch waist keeps drafts out with ease. Rounding out the vest's features is an athletic fit that is technically sound for archers and rifle shooters alike to prevent the wearer from feeling like the marshmallow man.

\$99.99

High Uintas Jacket

In conjunction with a puffy vest, I like to use a puffy jacket to further up the R-value of my clothing system in late September, October, and November. Having a lightweight jacket to go over the vest gives you more options for comfort and performance in a wide variety of climate conditions and changes.

With similar features as the High Uintas Vest, the High Uintas Jacket gives lightweight warmth in a synthetic insulation layer for the rest of your upper body. While I am a fan of having a hood on puffy jackets and this one does not have one, at times not having the hood is beneficial. I'm usually wearing a base or mid layer that has a hood plus I'll have the hood on my rain jacket if the wind is really whipping in order to hold in the heat that is effectively harnessed in the system from my body heat and puffy jacket. Not having a hood also saves ounces in the pack list and every ounce counts! However, if you just have to have the hood on your puffy jacket make sure you check out the Badlands Wasatch jacket on their website listed below.

The 16 oz. High Uintas Jacket is very affordable **\$159.99**

Both of these pieces can be found at www.badlandspacks.com.

KRYPTEK | TODD HELMS

Ares Jacket

Living on Mount Olympus gets cold, even for the God of War! So Kryptek decided to make a puffy jacket named in his honor that will keep you warm on your own Mount Olympus during those extended late season glassing sessions. With 800 fill power goose down, a roomy hood, zippered pockets, a stuff sack pocket and DWR finish, the Ares jacket won't let you fall in battle. It weighs a paltry 1lb. 5 oz. and comes in Kryptek's Highlander and Typhon patterns. This is one serious insulation layer that I've deployed multiple times this fall when the mercury dipped and I needed to prolong my vigil. Layer it over a Cadog jacket and under either the Vellus Fleece Jacket or Koldo Rain Jacket and you've got no excuse to leave the mountain.

\$259.99

Field-Proven Staff Picks



Highlander



Rana Brown



Rana Grey



Woodsmoke

KRYPTEK | TODD HELMS CONTINUED

Cadog Jacket

Sharing a name with a spear-wielding Welsh saint seems fitting for this extremely versatile jacket. Kryptek bills the Cadog as a softshell but I've found it to be more than that. With its DWR finish and pile fleece interior sandwiching a windproof lining, this jacket is more like the bailey protecting the heart of a castle. I wore the Cadog over a lightweight merino base layer and never found a need for another layer until well into October's chill evenings. The Cadog kept me cozy on archery elk hunts, windy pronghorn excursions and forays into the late fall mountains around northwest Wyoming. It was the American Express card of jackets for me. Comfort, warmth, fit and function all come together to make the Cadog one of the finest soft shell jackets I've ever worn.

\$229.99

Check out both of these great garments and more at www.kryptek.com

SIX SITE | TODD HELMS

South San Juan Jacket

Filled with 160 grams of Primaloft Gold insulation, this lightweight packable puffy jacket was a rock star this fall. I love how packable the South San Juan is and this came in extremely handy when I needed an insulation layer on my archery elk hunts, just stuff in the pack and go. I never noticed it was there until I needed it and then its warmth reminded me why I brought it along in the first place. There was one blustery afternoon in particular when it made me smile when I zipped it up. Brandon Mason and I were chasing elk when we got pinned down on a north facing ridge by a massive thunderstorm! I whipped out the South San Juan, shrugged into it and threw the Blackfoot rain jacket over the top. As the storm raged around us and lighting battered the peak above the temps plummeted with the north wind but I was warm and that's the point of a cold weather garment.

\$269.99

Blackfoot Waterproof Breathable Jacket

Picking up where the last description left off, while the puffy jacket kept me warm in that scenario it couldn't have done it without the Blackfoot. This 3-layer poly stretch waterproof jacket rebuffed the elements and allowed the San Juan to do its job keeping me warm while the Blackfoot kept me dry and sheltered from the wind. It's also pretty packable, which for me is a must, even during the late season because I often stow my outer layers while I grind away hiking or hunting fast because I do not like to work up a sweat and so would rather be a tad cold in those scenarios. I was heartily impressed by the Blackfoot and don't think you can find a much better outer shell for under

\$400.00

Learn more about these veteran-owned and American-made products at www.sixsitegear.com.

EASTMAN'S

Christmas Picks

-2018-

Merry
Christmas

IMAGE TAKEN BY Vic Schendel

OUTDOOR VISION BINO HARNESS | IKE EASTMAN

I spend more time with my bino harness on than most of my other gear. Probably as much as my boots. It is a very integral piece of my hunting gear. This harness by Outdoor Vision has been thought through a ton. It opens down which creates a cool little shelf. I use that for lens caps, my range finder or any thing I need to put somewhere quickly, quietly and for just a short sec.

Two side pockets work for a wind checker or an extra shell or more permanent storage. The harness itself works well under a pack and the bino safety straps are not bungee material they are permanent nylon webbing that is adjustable for length and don't get in the way when you drop them into the pouch. The magnetic closer is very quiet and one of the most secure closers I have found without a zipper. The pouch is built of foam so it is rigid enough to keep its shape but protects your optics. They also have an attachable rain fly and other accessories available, to help you organize your gear.

Outdoorvisiongear.com
\$99.99



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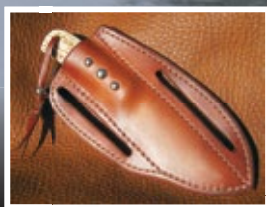
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EASTMANS' Christmas Picks -2018-

SITKA CORE LIGHTWEIGHT HOODY | BRANDON MASON

For the last two years I have been wearing the Core Lightweight Hoody on almost every hunt, especially during the warm early season. This piece is essentially a sun hoody, meaning it is designed to keep you cool in hot weather and protected from the sun's UV rays.

Now in my 40s I'm reaping the consequences of not wearing sunscreen nor my cowboy hat when working outside in my teens, 20s and 30s - you guessed it, precancerous spots on the sides of my face! Since I don't like to wear my cowboy hat while hunting and I despise wearing sunscreen, this sun hoody from Sitka couldn't have come at a better time.

With the hood up, the sides of my face and tops of my ears are protected and I actually stay cooler with the hood up on warm weather hunts since the breeze blows right through it. It also doubles as a great base layer piece as the season progresses. **\$119.00 at www.sitkagear.com.**



GSI JAVA PRESS | BRIAN BARNEY

Call me a coffee snob but I love a good cup of coffee in the morning. I just refuse to do a quick gas station cup and the options for a backcountry guy are even more limited. You have to use instant or tee bags and neither one I would consider a good cup. I have tried different french presses and the grounds always slip past, they are too heavy or they don't make enough.

I have now found the answer and it is the GSI Java press. This thing is light, works flawlessly and makes 30 oz. of to die for coffee. Making 30 oz. you have enough for you and a buddy or have enough for another cup on the vantage point. This GSI packs down and fits everything inside including a small cup.

Hunting the extreme backcountry for years coffee is the one thing that can really change my mood and make me feel human. It is one of the things I really look forward to on a hunt and at times has kept me in the game. If you know a coffee lover this is the perfect gift to complete his backcountry kit! **\$29.99**



A COAST headlamp with a black strap and a grey body, set against a large orange circle. The strap has "COAST" written on it in white. The headlamp has a lens and a switch.

A single dark grey sock with light grey accents on the heel, toe, and cuff, set against a large orange circle.

As crazy as it may sound, good hunting socks are pretty tough to come by even in today's market. Jim and the crew over at Kenetrek have hit the mark with these lightweight socks. The breathable Merino wool blend is very comfortable and breathable, warm when wet and resists odor better than most other materials, natural or synthetic alike. The weight of these socks is perfect for everything from everyday use to a mid-October hunt on a frosty morning. A few pairs of these bad boys would surely be welcomed into any hunter's stocking this Holiday.

Available at: www.kenetrek.com for about \$18.00 per pair.

[illegible]

EASTMANS' Christmas Picks -2018-



TRU BALL SHORT N SWEET S2 | DAN PICKAR

A perfect release that fits you is without a doubt the most important component to your bowhunting setup. If you've had training in the past shooting rifles, you know a proper trigger pull is essential for accuracy. Over the years I have shot a lot of different conventional trigger and back tension releases and the Short-N-Sweet S2 hook style release has quickly become my favorite.

There are plenty of different schools of thought when it comes to releases and shooting.

Most importantly you need to be comfortable and relaxed so an uncomfortable release is the last thing you should be worrying about. A relaxed hand and trigger finger is most important when it comes to executing a perfect shot under pressure. That's why I prefer the swept back trigger design the S2 provides. This allows your index finger to be completely relaxed when shooting without overextending causing strain and ultimately a bad shot. This also allows for the smallest amount of movement as possible in your hand during your release.

I encourage you to revisit your release aid this year and consider ways to improve it. Right now is the perfect time! And as always with your choice of release, avoid velcro as the buckle strap is quieter and gives you perfect fit consistency every time you put it on.

www.truball.com

\$79.99



MSR MINIWORKS EX PURIFIER SYSTEM | SCOTT REEKERS

Water in the backcountry is life! In that vein the simpler the process to obtain water the better. The MSR Miniworks filter did the job this year on multiple trips and the pump shined even when filtering some questionable water. Speaking of questionable, MSR is kind enough to include purification tablets with their kit for the really sketchy situations, you know, the elk wallow variety.

Pumping water can be great exercise, but with the Miniworks EX it won't destroy your arms. I may have filtered 30+liters in one setting on a mule deer hunt just to put this to the test. The filter can pump a liter a minute with it's simple cyli and the action is easy to use over and over with an indicator that will let you know when the carbon/ceramic filter is worn out. The EX can also be cleaned without any tools and when the mud and grime starts to slow you down take a few minutes to clean or backflush and you are good to go!

The business end of the purifier that goes into the water has a filter system that prevents the big stuff from getting sucked up the tube and the float works very well. Find a small pool of water, drop the float in and get started, it's that simple!

The 1lb. filter size packed is small and unobtrusive for a price of **\$99.95** at www.msrgear.com or your local Sportsman's Warehouse.



OUTDOOR EDGE RAZOR PRO | TODD HELMS

Every now and then I pick up a product and think, Wow! This thing is sweet! That is exactly what I did the first time I picked up the Razor Pro knife from Outdoor Edge. But when I first put it to use was when I truly appreciated it for what it is... perhaps the perfect big game hunting knife.

The Razor Pro combines the strongest replaceable blade system in the industry with a curved gutting blade. The result of this marriage is a knife that opens body cavities and runs straight seams through hide like nothing I've ever seen with the curved blade and offers up a razor sharp but durable replaceable blade knife for cutting and skinning work.

I used mine to breakdown five different antelope, and a couple of deer this fall and the knife never missed a beat. I never found myself wishing for a different tool and never felt like I needed another cutting instrument. The Razor Pro not only handled every task I demanded of it with aplomb it was always easy to find with its blaze orange handle.

At **\$79.99** this knife is something I can guarantee will make any hunter on your list smile twice; once when they open the package on Christmas and again when they put it to use for the first time. For full details visit www.outdooredge.com



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DESIGNED IN COLORADO 

MAKE THE CUT™

www.OutdoorEdge.com

EASTMANS' Christmas Picks 2018-

BLOODSPORT NIGHT FURY EXTREME | BEYOND THE GRID

I've always been a "fixed head" bowhunter, especially on larger game like elk. Over the years I've been testing larger cut expandable and hybrid broadheads and have seen a substantial increase in lethality. If you have the ability to select a broadhead for each specific hunt, do it!

That's exactly what I did when I picked the Night Fury Extreme for my antelope hunt. The Night Fury Extreme is an excellent broadhead for deer sized game and smaller. Blade angle is more steep than a lot of heads so be sure you have plenty of energy and momentum in your archery rig before you take this broadhead hunting. It's a true expandable with no fixed blades, and a two and a quarter inch expandable cut. When it comes to thin skinned, petite boned animals like antelope, the bigger hole you make the better.

The expandable design gives you field tip arrow flight every time in less than ideal conditions or in a situation where your form may be compromised. I prefer this type of broadhead in open country when I'm dealing with wind and longer shooting. And that's why the Night Fury Extreme is a great choice for your next open country deer or antelope hunt.

www.bloodsportarchery.com

\$39.99 per 3 pack



ON X SUBSCRIPTION | EASTMANS' ELEVATED

On X mapping systems has been one of the most influential advances in the outdoor industry. Now you can get all 50 states to all your devices for a year for \$99.99. You can get the app on your phone and take advantage of accurate GPS navigation even when you don't have service. You are able to save maps and access them in remote country. Take advantage of topography maps, aerial imagery and a hybrid topography with topo lines.

This app is a game changer for scouting and for hunting and I use it all the time. It accurately displays private and public along with other opportunities like hunt yes and block management. You can save waypoints, navigate and even share waypoints with buddies. Sharing waypoints is so handy for meeting someone in the backcountry or giving him your camp location. You can also take advantage of over 400 different map overlays. Use the Eastman's layer, wilderness layer, trail layer, burn layer and more.

It is crazy everything you can do with this app and they are constantly adding new features. I use this on my phone and at home on my computer and all my saved information is synced. Whether a hunter has the app or not, another year of this app could possibly be the best present you could buy!

\$99.99



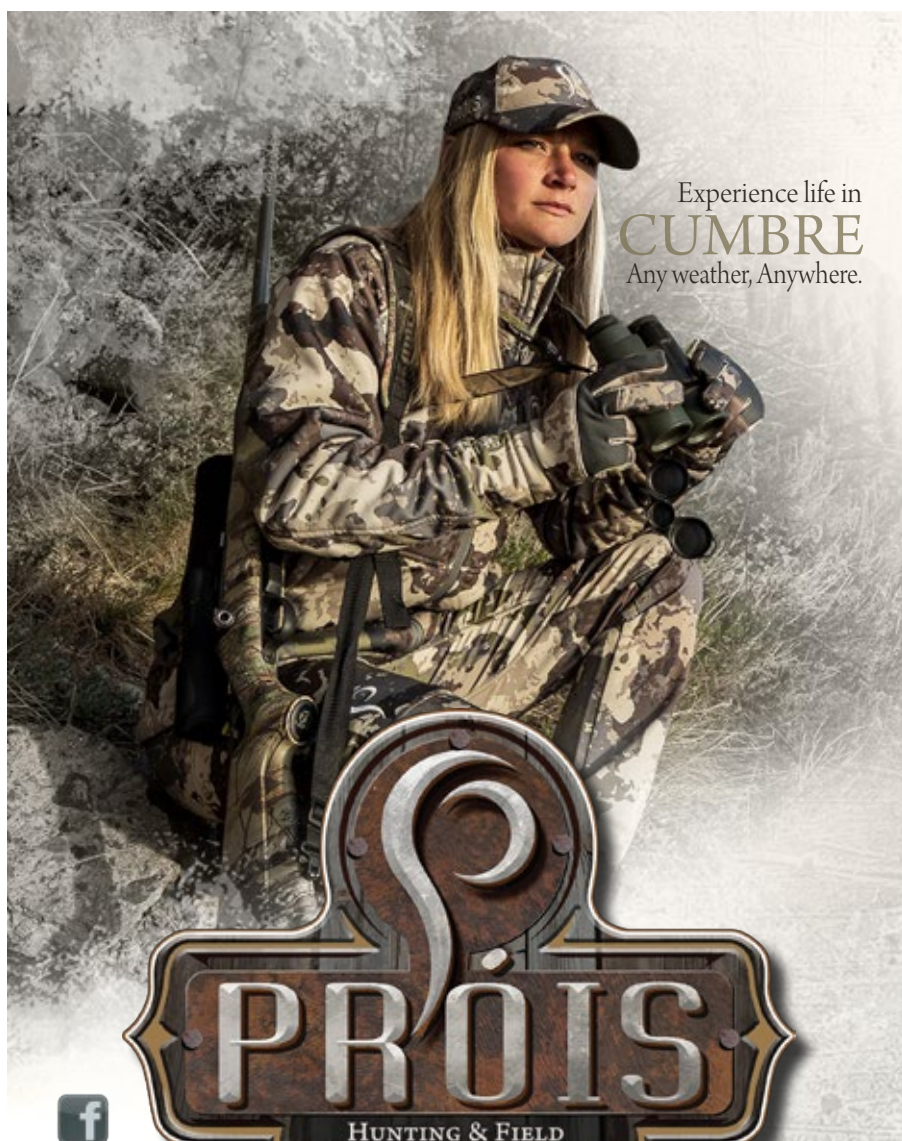
ZINK LONG NECK ROCKER | WINGMEN

I've often heard it said that goose calls are like wives for two reasons... first, when you get used to one it's hard to make yourself want another and second, never put your lips on another man's, well you get the picture. So it was that when I got the chance to "run some traffic" with the new Long Neck Rocker from ZINK I was excited but guarded at the same time.

Little did I know that this new call would become my absolute go to! The LNR has a "medium" pitch that works perfectly for several subspecies of Canada geese. It's not real high but not too low either and with it's perfect amount of built in back pressure I was cracking honks and laying down guttural moans in minutes. The Long Neck Rocker is one sick call!

I will tell you this, I don't know a single waterfowler who wouldn't freak out if an LNR showed up in their stocking. In fact, it might just become their new favorite goose call. It did for me.

The Long Neck Rocker retails for **\$160** and is available in either acrylic or wood but this may be the perfect call to have in Bird's Eye Maple. To see more head over **to www.zinkcalls.com**



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HORIZON FIREARMS HUNTER HZ IN 6.5 PRC |

BY TODD HELMS

When I first began hearing about the 6.5 PRC cartridge almost two years ago I couldn't wait to get my hands on one. When I saw that Horizon Firearms was chambering the 6.5 PRC those hands got itchy. Then, this past summer when Brandon Mason informed me I would have the chance to test a Horizon Hunter HZ in 6.5 PRC those hands began to shake. I had the privilege of testing a Horizon Endeavor HZ a couple of years back and have since been anxiously awaiting my chance to test a Hunter HZ. Having it be the hot new 6.5 PRC was icing on the cake.

Horizon is a relatively new custom rifle maker from College Station, Texas, but being a relative newcomer hasn't kept them from earning a reputation for quality and unique custom designs that shoot as good as they look and feel. The Hunter HZ I received from Horizon sported a spiral-fluted green Cerakote-finished 20"

barrel. When I pulled it out of the box the rifle felt well balanced and I knew it would be a rock solid platform to launch the newest 6.5 at both steel and critters.

However, no rifle is truly complete until it's wearing some glass. I nestled a scope into the supplied iota

familiar with the rifle. It was now time to take it hunting!

In its first outing the Hunter HZ tipped over a nice Wyoming pronghorn with gusto at a shade under 400 yards. The situation called for a quick decision and a precise shot as the buck wasn't going to hang around long. I settled into the KREMLIN stock and steadied the crosshairs on his chest, took a breath and let it out as I began my trigger squeeze. Bang! The crack of the rifle surprised me, but the design of the stock kept me in the scope and I watched the buck crumple and heard the thwack of a properly placed bullet hitting home. I could not ask for more.

Seldom have I picked up a rifle and just known it was destined to be one of my favorites. It usually takes some time getting to know each other and some successes together to create a fondness in my heart for a particular shootin' iron. Not so with the Hunter HZ...it was love at first sight for me and my only regret is that I'll have to send her home soon but hopefully not before we get to chase some late season elk.

So, if you're like me and have an affinity for semi-custom or custom rifles, give a very hard look at the lineup from Horizon and don't think they only offer what you see in stock at <https://www.horizonfirearms.com/>. These folks specialize in the unique and if you can dream it up they can build it. However, the Hunter HZ with its \$4599 price tag is tough to beat for an out-of-the-box, semi-custom rifle that will most likely shoot better than you or I are capable of.



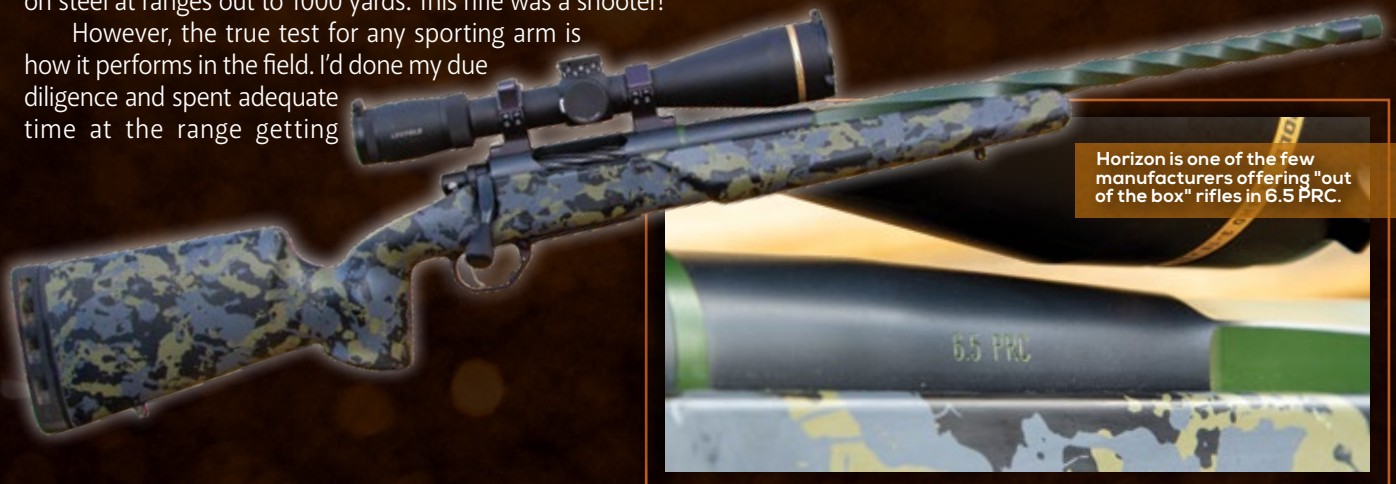
The wide spiral fluting of the Hunter HZ provides increased surface area and aesthetics.

Nomad ZL rings, bore sighted the rig, grabbed a couple boxes of ammo and headed to the range.

"But Todd, what about getting those articles edited?" Later, this rifle ain't gonna shoot herself.

Once I got the Hunter HZ dialed and configured a DOPE chart the rest was pure pleasure. Utilizing the iota KREMLIN stock with its vertical grip and semi-flat forend to seemingly weld the rifle to virtually any rest I chose was thoughtless, purely instinctive, intuitive rifle mechanics that resulted in hit after hit on steel at ranges out to 1000 yards. This rifle was a shooter!

However, the true test for any sporting arm is how it performs in the field. I'd done my due diligence and spent adequate time at the range getting



Horizon is one of the few manufacturers offering "out of the box" rifles in 6.5 PRC.

2018

DEER TOUR

**HUNTER**

Found Dead
Mike Clegg

OWNER

Dan
Woodbridge

SCORE

265-3/8 B&C
Non-Typ.
B&C Gross

LOCATION

Niobrara Co. WY

YEAR

2003

SPONSORS

This giant deer was found dead by Mike Clegg in Niobrara County, Wyoming in 2003. While out hunting Mike stumbled upon this incredible buck. The deer appeared to have been wounded by another hunter and died a couple weeks later. It still has a little velvet on the antlers, indicating it must have been wounded in the early season. This buck is proof that one never knows the possibilities while out hunting. Mike's discovery is one of the biggest deer to ever come out of Niobrara County, Wyoming.

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2018

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PELICAN VAULT CASES | BY IKE EASTMAN

When traveling to hunt or just spending a day in the field there are a few things to consider with your gear. We spend, don't tell my wife, thousands of dollars on our gear. Your optics and rifle are among the most expensive pieces, so protecting them while in transit is very important, especially if that travel includes a commercial flight with some baggage "mishandlers." Bush planes are not as big of a problem as those guys are used to working around these items. However some of the luggage guys (mishandlers) can be extremely hard on stuff. Just YouTube baggage handlers and you will see a plethora of bad handling. Pelican cases have become the Cadillac of storage cases. They are known for durability and function, the best you can buy but there is another concern a traveler has to take into account, those baggage weight limits and the problem with lightweight plastics is durability. Pelican has found the perfect mix between weight and durability. So here's a glimpse at three of my favorite, travel tested pieces from Pelican.



**V800 VAULT
DOUBLE RIFLE CASE**

This case is built for two rifles and has the same double clasp latch system that all Pelican cases have. It comes with an extra layer of foam so you can cut out the shape of your rifles to keep them snug and secure. I also was able to cut out some space for my bino's and spotter. This is where the lightweight but durable polymer shell comes into play, I didn't go over the 50lb. airline weight limit as I have with other cases.



**V550 VAULT
EQUIPMENT CASE**

This is the perfect case for a break down firearm, camera equipment (what I use it for) or gear like optics, valuables and breakables like souvenirs and glassware. The V550, like all the others, has a very sturdy stainless steel loop that will handle the biggest of locks to ensure safety and security.





V250 VAULT AMMO CASE

The Ammo Case is the one piece that doesn't have a foam lining. As you all know Ammo is not breakable but needs to be kept in a secure, safe case that will not break and scatter cartridges all over the ground. This, like all the other cases, has a handle that folds flat into the lid so the box doesn't have any parts that can get hooked on something and ripped off.



Check out all of the 10 different options of the VAULT by Pelican at www.pelican.com. Remember safety, security and durability is what pelican has built their brand on. That is why they are the Cadillac of traveling cases.



PHOTO WINNERS

Eastmans' has teamed up with Eberlestock to reward you with a prize package for your quality photos. Keep checking this ad for the Photo Winners in each issue.

FIELD PHOTO WINNER



Shawn Chittim/Joey Tantardino
A once in a lifetime bull like this one deserves an extended photo session and Shawn made sure to capture all the best angles of Joey's bull. Take the time for great pictures, they help preserve the hunt long after the meat is gone.

SUPPORT PHOTO WINNER



Michael "Sparky" Sparks
By constantly taking pictures Sparky was able to capture many magical "in the moment" images to help make this hunt last a lifetime. If your camera is in your pack you won't be taking pictures and you'll be missing out.

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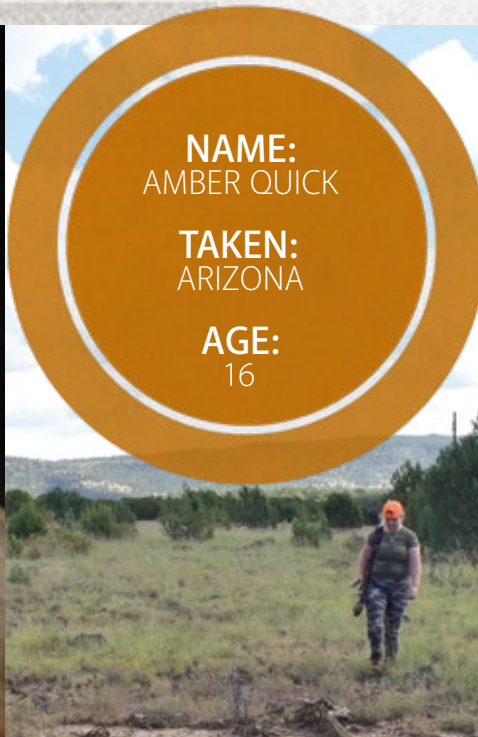
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Amber is a high school senior, president of Cerro Alto 4-H Club in California and avid horse woman. She drew this Arizona tag with three points. Princess of the hunting camp, her hunting minions got her on this great elk (bigger than her dad's) after a week of scouting and four days of hunting.

RAEGAN DOAN, 15 | NEVADA



.....

Raegan dropped this nice 3-point with one shot from her Tikka .300 Win Mag. She was hunting with Ground Zero Outfitters which are part of her family. After taking care of the deer, she went straight from the field to cheer practice.

QUINN CAREY, 14 | ALASKA



.....

On his first hunt, Quinn and his father put a stalk on a few nice caribou bulls that didn't work out. He started to second guess himself and get a bit discouraged after passing on a few smaller bulls. Then he learned the magic of hunting. Never give up, because everything can change at any second.

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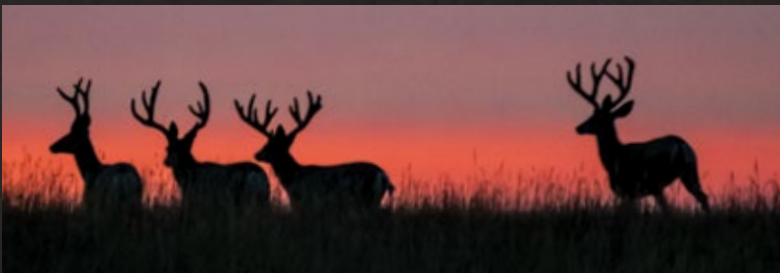
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TROPHY**

HUNTERS

JUSTIN HELVIK | MONTANA



This buck was the culmination of Justin's dream year in which he shot a mountain goat, arrowed both an antelope buck and 6-point bull elk and celebrated the birth of his first child. He shot this buck on a bitterly cold day in eastern Montana after belly crawling in the snow for over an hour.



Hornady is one of the premier ammunition manufacturers for Western big game hunting. Check out their full selection of ammunition at www.hornady.com for more details.

MELANIE ANSETH | MONTANA



Melanie and her husband Martin were guided by son Silas and Chase Fisher, ranch owner. Chase spotted this bull in his bed after they had hiked two miles. They crossed a very steep draw to get downwind and waited a while out of the cold wind for the bull to get up. After taking a short nap, Melanie got up and dropped the bull with one shot from her .280 at 70 yards.

CHRISTINE DAVEY | WYOMING



During the Wyoming muzzleloader season Christine shot this unusual buck with her .50 caliber Dixie flintlock rifle with a 42" octagon barrel and iron sights. Her brother Ryan had first spotted the buck her family named "Ramalope." He ended up being very elusive and hard to stalk close to because the horns don't stick up above his head.

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It's pretty rare to find a 3-point this big. Rick and Jared took the time to capture photos of him from every angle.



After 12 years of putting in for limited entry deer points my dad decided to burn his points on a new late muzzleloader hunt that Utah started doing on some of its general season units. He was thinking this hunt that started November 1 wasn't going to be very hard. It ended up being quite the opposite, with no

weather and the deer barely rutting. It was tough after hunting hard for the first five days of the hunt, passing up on quite a few smaller bucks. With no luck on finding anything big day six rolled around and after being messed up that morning by another hunter, that evening after getting back to camp I was able to spot this guy from miles away, heading into

some hayfields.

That night I explained to my dad that I had found a big buck we needed to go after. After looking on onXmaps and figuring out who owned what property and then calling around to get permission to trespass we proceeded to make a plan for the next morning and got in the place after glassing

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for a couple hours we were able to finally spot the buck. Dad ended up making an amazing shot with a muzzleloader.

I've got to thank my dad for all the time he spent with me over the years teaching me what he knows about hunting. It was nice to return the favor for him and I must thank all of my hunting buddies that came and helped on this hunt with my dad.



GEAR LIST

Firearm Remington Ultimate Muzzleloader | **Scope** Nightforce 5.5 x 22 NSX | **Ammo** Barnes | **Binoculars** Vortex/Zeiss | **Spotting Scope** Swarovski/Vortex | **Clothing** Game Gear Hunting | **Boots** Rocky | **Packs** Horn Hunter/Badlands | **Rangefinder** Vortex | **Knife** Outdoor Edge/Havalon | **GPS** Garmin | **Shooting Sticks** Primos Trigger Stix

About the Author | Rick is a 61-year-old power plant operator who loves hunting, camping and spending time with his wife, kids and grandkids.

Gear Giveaway
see page 4.

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2019 PROJECTED APPLICATION DEADLINES (DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

Deadline	State	Species	Issue	Month
January 31, 2019	Wyoming	Elk	EBJ 111	Jan/Feb
February 12, 2019	Arizona	Elk/Antelope	EBJ 111	Jan/Feb
February 28, 2019	Wyoming	Sheep/Moose/Goat	EHJ 171	Feb/Mar
March 7, 2019	Utah	All Species	EHJ 171	Feb/Mar
March 15, 2019	Montana	Elk/Deer	EHJ 171	Feb/Mar
March 20, 2019	New Mexico	All Species	EHJ 171	Feb/Mar
April 2, 2019	Colorado	All Species	EBJ 112	Mar/Apr
April 30, 2019	Idaho	Sheep/Moose/Goat	EBJ 112	Mar/Apr
May 1, 2019	Montana	Sheep/Moose/Goat	EBJ 112	Mar/Apr
April 15, 2019	Nevada	All Species	EHJ 172	Apr/May
May 15, 2019	Oregon	All Species	EHJ 172	Apr/May
May 16, 2019	Washington	All Species	EHJ 172	Apr/May
May 31, 2019	Wyoming	Deer/Antelope	EHJ 172	Apr/May
June 3, 2019	Montana	Antelope	EBJ 113	May/Jun
June 2, 2019	California	All Species	EBJ 113	May/Jun
June 5, 2019	Idaho	Elk/Deer/Antelope	EBJ 113	May/Jun
June 11, 2019	Arizona	Sheep/Deer	EBJ 113	May/Jun

UNDERSTANDING THE DRAW [2018]

BY DAVE HOSHOUR

For people who are new to western big game hunting the process of obtaining a big game license or tag is often a very complicated puzzle, especially if they are used to hunting whitetail deer in the Midwest, South or East and their state requires no more than presenting a hunter safety card and the cost of the license to hunt anywhere in the state. Hunting in the West, they soon find out, is a whole other ball game.

COMPETITION FOR LICENSES

To begin with, there are far more people who want a license to hunt western big game than there are licenses available. Rather than just walking up to the counter, they soon find out that they will have to compete for those licenses with many thousands of other hunters from across the country.

How can that be when western states are so large? Two words – population density. The State of Ohio can issue 429,000 whitetail deer licenses because whitetails don't require as much space as mule deer do in Colorado where the State will issue more like 85,000 licenses, about 20% as many. And while some people dream of hunting whitetails in Ohio, apparently 212,000 people around the country dream about Colorado's big mule deer bucks. So, there are about 2.5 people applying for every Colorado deer license.

For the highest demand species – bighorn sheep, mountain goat, bison and moose, which are often called trophy species, competition is extreme and your odds of getting drawn may be less than 1%.

For completely up to date information like tag quotas, season dates and deadlines be sure to take advantage of the Eastmans' MRS Annual & Digital version of our MRS as we update that information throughout the year as the state agencies make it public.

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WELCOME to the Members' Research Section (MRS): This up-to-date publication is prepared for your convenience—however, always check with the appropriate agency for current information. Our information is gathered from sources deemed reliable, but Eastmans' Hunting Journal is not responsible for errors contained within. You must do your own research! The MRS is merely a tool designed to get you started. We recommend you contact biologists, Forest Service personnel, BLM personnel, taxidermists, ranchers, outfitters and other hunters in order to find out about the trophy opportunities in an area. Keep in mind, any area can change from year to year depending on a variety of factors... but that's why they call it hunting! All MRS information contained herein is copyrighted and may not be reproduced by any means without written permission from Eastmans' Publishing, Inc. © 2018



DRAW COSTS BY STATE

ST	Upfront Costs	Adult Nonresident License	Pay for License	Pay for Tags	\$ Kept
AZ	License, app fee, tag if paper appl.	\$160 + tag (\$315 - \$5,415)	Upfront	When drawn (online apps)	License, app fee
CA	License, app fee, tag	\$164 + tag (\$277 - \$1,512)	Upfront	Upfront	License, app fee
CO	App fee, stamp^	Varies by species \$396-\$2,211	When Drawn^	No separate tag.	App, stamp fees
ID	License, app, degradation mgmt/access fees, archery fee	\$155 + tag (\$301 - \$2,212)	Upfront	When drawn DE, elk, PH Upfront MO, SH, GT	License, app, archery, degradation mgmt/access
MT	License (varies by species), app fee, stamp, license fee	Varies by Species \$205 - \$1,250 DE&Elk Combo \$1001	Upfront - DE, elk, PH Drawn - MO, SH, GT	No separate tag	App fee, stamps, license fee, license^
NV	License, app fee, tag	\$155 + tags (\$240 - \$1,200)	Upfront	Upfront	Fee stamps, license*
NM	License, Tags, App Fee, Stamps	\$65 + tag (\$283 - \$3,173)	Upfront	Upfront	App fee
OR	License, app fee, agent fee	\$167 + tag (\$384 - \$1,469)	Upfront	When drawn	License, app, agent fees
UT	License, app fee	\$65 + (\$283-\$2,615)	Upfront	When drawn	License, app fee
WA	License by species, app fee, tag	Varies \$434 DE - DE, Elk Combo \$739 MO, SH \$1652	Upfront	When drawn	License, app fee, archery if applicable
WY	License by species, app fee	Varies by species, draw type	Upfront	No separate tag	App fee

^ New in 2018 * License can be refunded but applicant gets no bonus pt Note: some states give discounts for disabled vets & youth, among others

COSTS

Predictably, with all this demand, the prices for these hunting opportunities can be very high compared to non-western states, sometimes several thousand dollars for a nonresident right to hunt. I don't mean a guided hunt. I mean paying the state's wildlife department hundreds or thousands of dollars just for the right to hunt. Now, species with a lot of tags, like deer, elk and pronghorn are usually in the hundreds of dollars. They range from a low of \$396 in Colorado to as high as \$1,283 to apply for elk in the Wyoming special draw. Typically, the cost for nonresidents is roughly ten times the cost for residents.

LICENSES VS. TAGS

How do states determine who gets licenses and who doesn't? They vary, and there is a lot of information to come on that, but first let's clear up our terminology. Some states require you to buy a general hunting license or combination hunting/fishing license before you can apply for a "tag" to hunt a particular species. A tag is the right to hunt one species of animal and the term comes from the paper tag that you must attach to the horns to show that you had permission to take that animal. The chart nearby will show you which states use this system. In almost every case that license cost is nonrefundable – the price of admission to the draw. That may sound crummy, but it keeps less serious people from applying and so that helps your odds – fewer applicants, better odds. States also tack on a small application fee and maybe another small fee or two that are also nonrefundable. Nevada gives a choice about getting a refund that I'll expand on later.

Other states, like Colorado and Wyoming, don't require you to buy a license and a tag. In those states you buy a "license" to hunt say, pronghorn. You just pay for that species, and if you aren't drawn, the license cost is returned to you and the State keeps the application fee and other small fees. In 2018, Colorado made that even easier – you don't pay for the license upfront, you pay when and if you are drawn, though you must give them your credit card information when you apply.

NONRESIDENT ALLOCATION CAPS

The other thing out-of-state hunters learn quickly is that residents get most of the licenses (or tags). In the remainder of this article, I will use those terms interchangeably.

With a few exceptions, all western states set a pretty low limit on the percentage of tags that will go to nonresidents of that state. This is called a nonresident allocation cap.

The most common cap is 10%, but it varies by state and by species. The range goes from 3% for most species in Oregon to 35% for deer in Colorado. California is easily the stingiest state. It only gives out one license a year for all its species, except for deer, which is a 10% cap. In some high-demand/low population species like mountain goats in Nevada, there are no nonresident licenses.

Nonresident caps are not guarantees for nonresidents to get so many tags, they are the most that will be given out. It is also important to know that caps are not only a state-wide maximum, but they set the limit for individual geographic areas as well. More about that in the Units section below.

OVER-THE-COUNTER LICENSE

There are some exceptions to nonresident allocation caps and competitive draws. Colorado has so many elk that the State does give out over-the-counter archery-only licenses for many areas. They do the same for pronghorn (often called antelope). But these are the exception. There are precious few places out West you can buy a license for any kind of big game over the counter.

UNITS

Western states all divide their land into hunting units. Colorado for instance, divides the state into over 180 units. If you want to hunt Unit 53 in Gunnison County, you put in for that unit as your first choice and maybe another two units as second and third choices. You may not get drawn for any of them, at least the first time you try. If you successfully draw that license you can only hunt Unit 53. All states have maps in their brochures for you to see where each unit is located and there are legal boundary descriptions as well.

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Sometimes you apply for a unit like Colorado Unit 35, but you are also allowed to hunt neighboring Units 36, 361 and 45. These are called “valid units” in our information tables. Other states, like Idaho, give new numbers for groups of units, like 1X. By their map and description, you can see what geographic area makes up 1X.

DECIDING ON A UNIT

How in the world do you know which unit to apply for, especially when you live out of state? I mean, not only do you have to pick a state, but now you also have to pick which small part of that state to hunt in. How hard is it to draw one unit vs. another? What is the hunter success rate? How much public land is there? Is it a good area for big bucks? How does it compare to the best units in another state? Holy cow! Deciding where to apply just became overwhelming. Help!

That’s where Eastmans’ comes in. In fact, without the unit system, the Eastmans’ Members Research Section (MRS) might not even exist. But thank God it does.

What the Eastmans’ MRS does is to give you information on all the great, good and decent units. And, we have standardized our grades so that a blue-chip unit in Wyoming is on the same level as a blue-chip unit in Arizona. Yes, you can find information on competitive draw odds and harvest success rates on state websites, but those are just ridiculously long lists. There is a lot more to know, like where the bigger bucks are, how much public land a unit has and how accessible it is. In fact, the full Eastmans’ tables have somewhere between 30 and 40 columns of information on each unit.

That may seem overwhelming, but the beauty of the MRS tables is that they put the better units into a grid where you can compare them on all these points. We organize information by type – general information like the unit #, valid units and tentative season dates, then draw information, public land information, harvest success and a grades section. Currently, that is what we put in the Eastmans’ Hunting Journal and the Eastmans’ Bowhunting Journal print and digital versions and this book containing all the MRS information for the past year, updated for results released since they ran in the monthly Journals.

TYPES OF COMPETITIVE DRAWS

How a state decides who gets the right to hunt a species in a certain area varies, but there are three basic systems and two minor ones. These are types of “draws,” short for drawings and get their name from the old thing of drawing a card or drawing a number out of a hat.

RANDOM DRAWS

First up, the easiest to understand, is just a straight-up random draw. Everyone has the same crummy odds whether they have put in for twenty years or this is their first year. This is the most equal system and some people like that for that reason, but often it means that your chances are only 1 in 100 or 1 in 10 and that’s discouraging. States with random draws are Idaho and New Mexico. Oregon is a random draw on sheep and goat, Wyoming bison and goat are also random draws.

PREFERENCE POINT DRAWS

To reward loyalty for people who keep putting in and to kindly let them “earn” their license, several states give

unsuccessful applicants a “preference point” every year they don’t get their first choice. The way these draws work are that the group of applicants that have the most points are the ones first up to draw. If all of them draw, then all the applicants with the next most points are up and the computer will look at their first choice (in most states) and give it to them if the quota for that hunt has not been met. If it has been met, in most states it will go the to next applicant, but some states will look at that hunter’s additional choices before it moves on. Again, which states do which is in the table later in this article.

Obviously, the advantage of a preference point system is that it rewards people who keep applying and the longer they apply, the more of an advantage they have. It also gives some certainty to how long it will take to draw a hunt. In our tables, we list how many points it took last year to draw that hunt. Colorado, Wyoming, Oregon and California have preference point draws.

MAX POINTS & THE HORROR OF POINT CREEP

But because the number of applicants with “max points,” the most points anyone in that state has accumulated, is sometimes bigger than the number of licenses for a very sought-after hunt, not everyone with the most points will be successful. They will get another preference point though. What happens then is instead of that hunt taking say 8 preference points (8 years) to draw, the number then goes to 9 points because all those with 8 points that didn’t get drawn this year now have an extra point.

That’s called point creep and it is one of the most frustrating things in this whole business because it can be like the donkey and the carrot – the prize keeps staying just out of reach. You thought 8 points would get that coveted license, but no, now it takes 9. Maybe it goes to 10 next year. Sense the pain? There are hunts, like Unit 201 elk in Colorado that take as many as 26 points to draw – point creep has pushed the requirement up to 26 years of applying before you can draw that tag! Is it worth it? Not to me, but it is to some.

Point creep is more of an issue the more demand for a hunt outstrips the number of licenses. Nowhere is that more of an issue than with bighorn sheep or mountain goats, the species that along with Shiras’ moose and bison, are referred to as “trophy species.” By the way, so you don’t embarrass yourself, you use the word species for both one species or more than one. Don’t make the mistake of using the word specie. It’s not a word, at least when it comes to animals.

BONUS POINT DRAWS

Because of the frustration of point creep, some states have gone to an in-between type draw process that uses bonus points. In this system, just as with preference points, you get a point every year you don’t draw your first choice. The difference is that a bonus point is another entry into the draw. So, like a random draw, everyone has a chance to draw without waiting umpteen years, but the fact that more bonus points give loyal applicants more chances rewards them. Arizona, Montana, Nevada, Utah and Washington use bonus points and they all square the points, so that two bonus points give you four chances to draw and 10 give you 100. Sometimes they add one to that number. Oregon uses a bonus point draw for trophy species.

The advantage is that everyone can draw. The disadvantage

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is that everyone can draw. Why is that a disadvantage? Because no matter how many bonus points you have, you can never be certain you will draw and that makes planning difficult. I've heard of people with max points who year after year can't seem to draw the tag they're after.

But Wait, There's (a little) More...

HYBRID AND WEIGHTED DRAWS

Almost done. There are two more draw types and Colorado uses both. In a hybrid draw, some very popular hunts have a portion of the licenses set aside for a preference point draw and a lesser percentage available on a random draw.

In a weighted bonus points draw, which Colorado uses for trophy species, anyone can draw, but beginning in an applicant's fourth year they start getting weighted bonus points. In this system, random numbers are assigned and divided by the number of weighted bonus points an applicant has. The lowest resulting number is the first up to get their license.

TWO-STAGE DRAWS

Several states have a two-part draw in which each part is a different type of draw. Arizona for example, puts 20% of the tags into a preference point draw in which they look at your first two choices and the other 80% of the tags go into a random draw. Utah, Oregon and Wyoming have some type of two-part draw where one part is random. Wyoming also has a "special draw" in addition to their preference point draw. The special draw is also a preference point draw but has a significantly higher license cost and winning applicants typically need a point or two less to draw than in the regular draw.

LEFTOVER DRAWS

If there are any licenses that didn't get assigned due to lack of demand, they will be left over and are available either in a leftover draw or in a first-come, first-served rush. The real reason for the rush though is that some people return licenses for various reasons and sometimes these returned licenses are high demand hunts.

GROUP APPLICATIONS

Often, applicants apply together. Often, the group will differ in how many points they each have. States vary with how they handle that. Some states just use the lowest point number in the group, some average the points, either to the nearest number or round down. The size of the group allowable varies by state. Again, see the table.

LOSING POINTS

You can lose your points if you stop putting in. Check the chart to find out what it takes.

Buying Preference Points

In some states, you don't have to apply and be unsuccessful to get a point. Apart from the draw, during a

specified period you can buy a preference point.

EXTRA POINTS

Arizona gives out an extra usable point for taking a hunter safety class in Arizona and awards another point for applying for so many years. Washington gives up to ten points for turning in a poacher.

LANDOWNER LICENSES/TAGS

I don't have space to cover this in detail here, but landowners, both resident and nonresident who have big game on their land, own a minimum number of acres and either improve that habitat or allow hunter access can get landowner licenses, usually good for one person in their family. Some states allow the re-sale of these licenses, some don't.

YOUTH LICENSES

Some states have youth licenses. These are usually easier to draw. They can usually be applied for as long as the youth meets the minimum age for getting a big game license by the time the season starts. Disabled hunters may also get preference. Many states have special programs for disabled vets.

TURNING LICENSES BACK IN

States vary on whether you can turn a license back in and what qualifies for that. Generally, your points are restored if you do that. In others, you bought it, it's yours.

WRAP-UP

Now we get down to it. The rest of this book is information to help you decide what state, what unit, what season to apply for when it comes to different species. While that may seem overwhelming, things are well-organized, and we often put in our two cents worth. Well, when you're a fourth-generation professional hunter in your state, that advice might be worth a bit more than two cents – I'd say a lot more. Other writers are those you might know from Eastmans' Hunting TV, or guides and hunters, industry pros or in my case, a hunter that networks with industry pros, biologists and outfitters and has a knack for numbers and explaining how it all works.

Good luck this coming year. May you not only be successful in bagging your species of choice, but may you have great memories of time afield with family or good friends, of campfire conversations, of well-earned evening weariness, the taste of backstraps, of the beauty of dawn and dusk, with the magnificent specimens of God's creativity and the monster bucks and bulls that got away.

Now the fun and anticipation begins again with planning for this year.

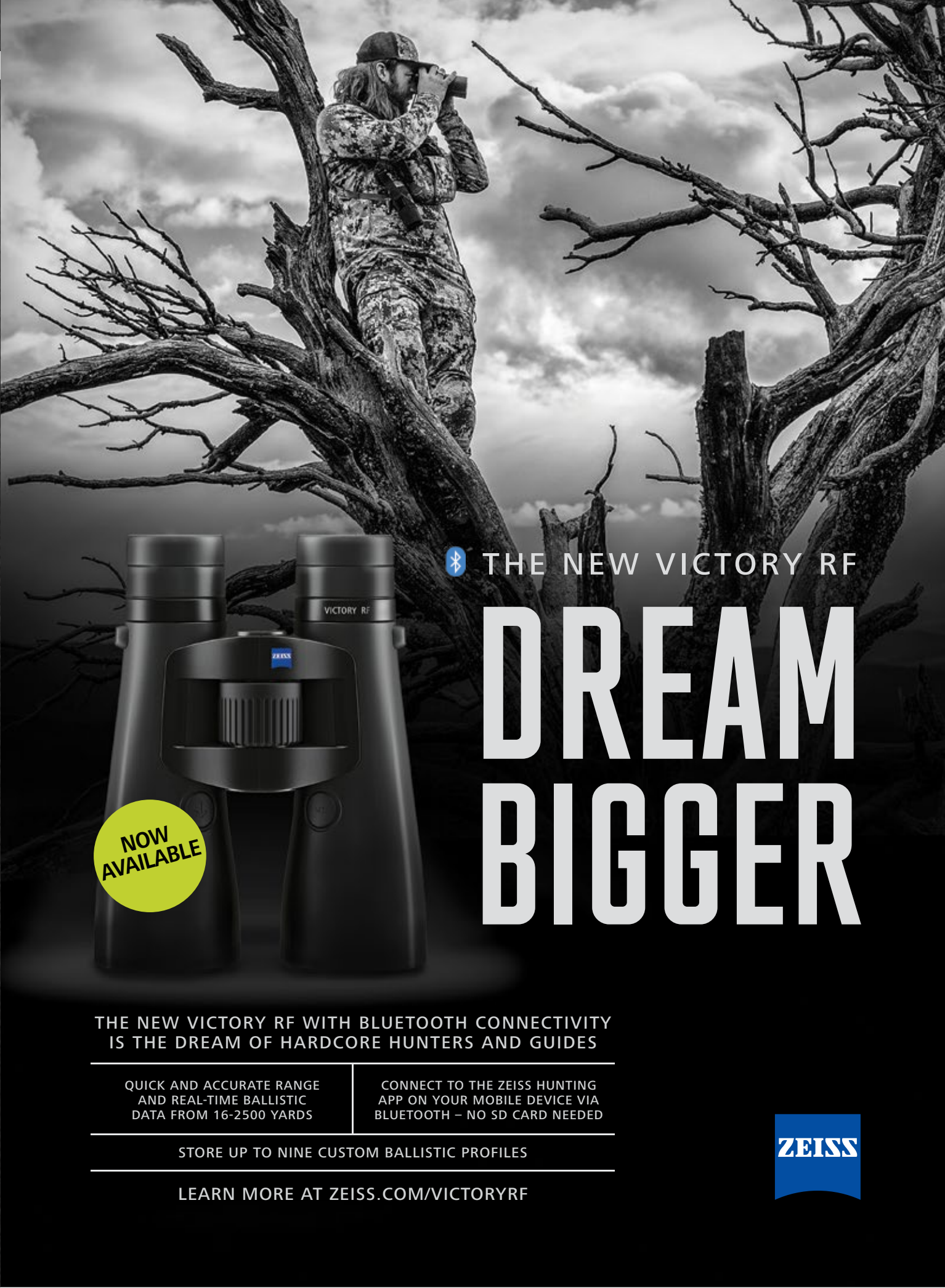


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